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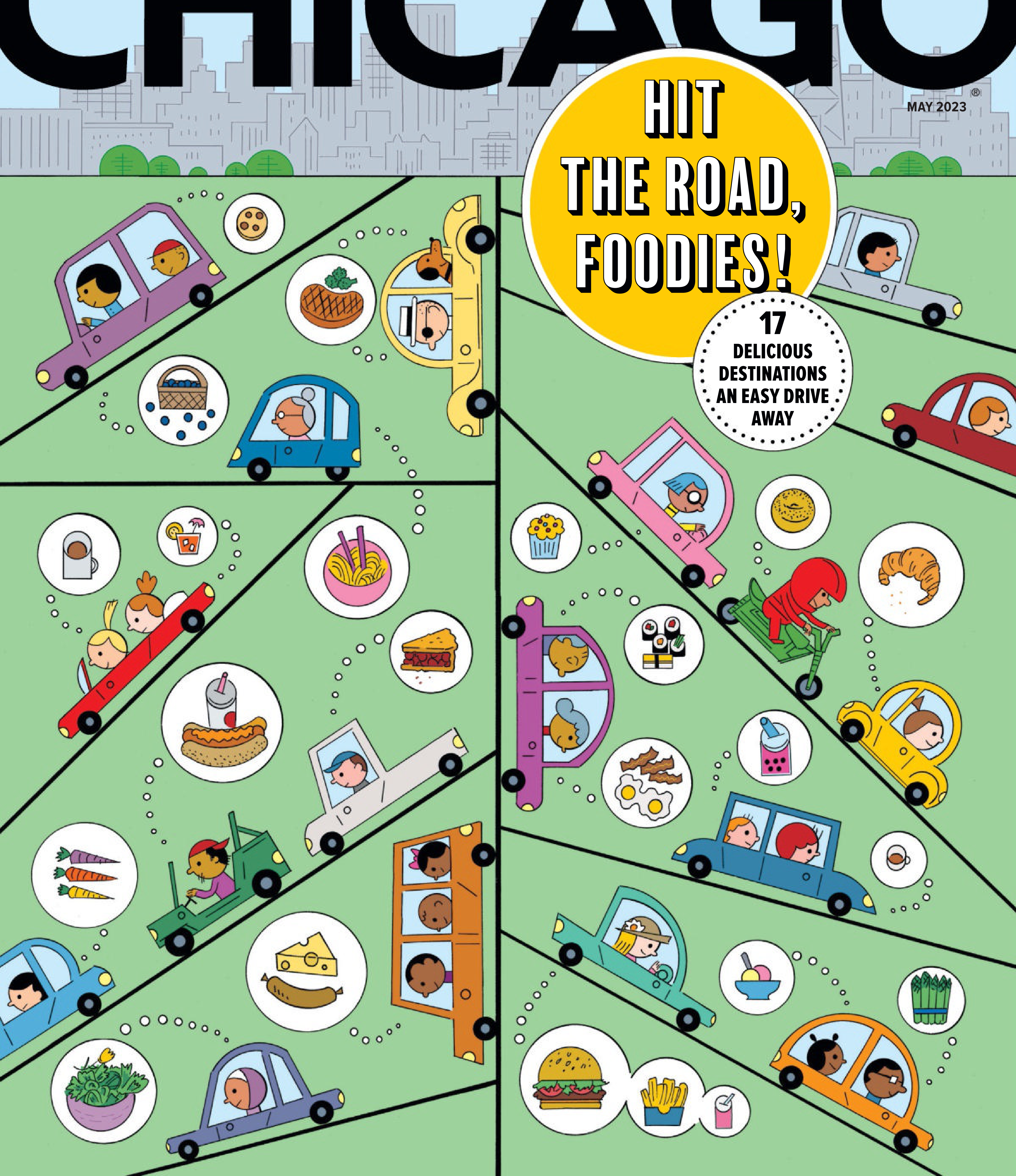
CHICAGO

MAY 2023



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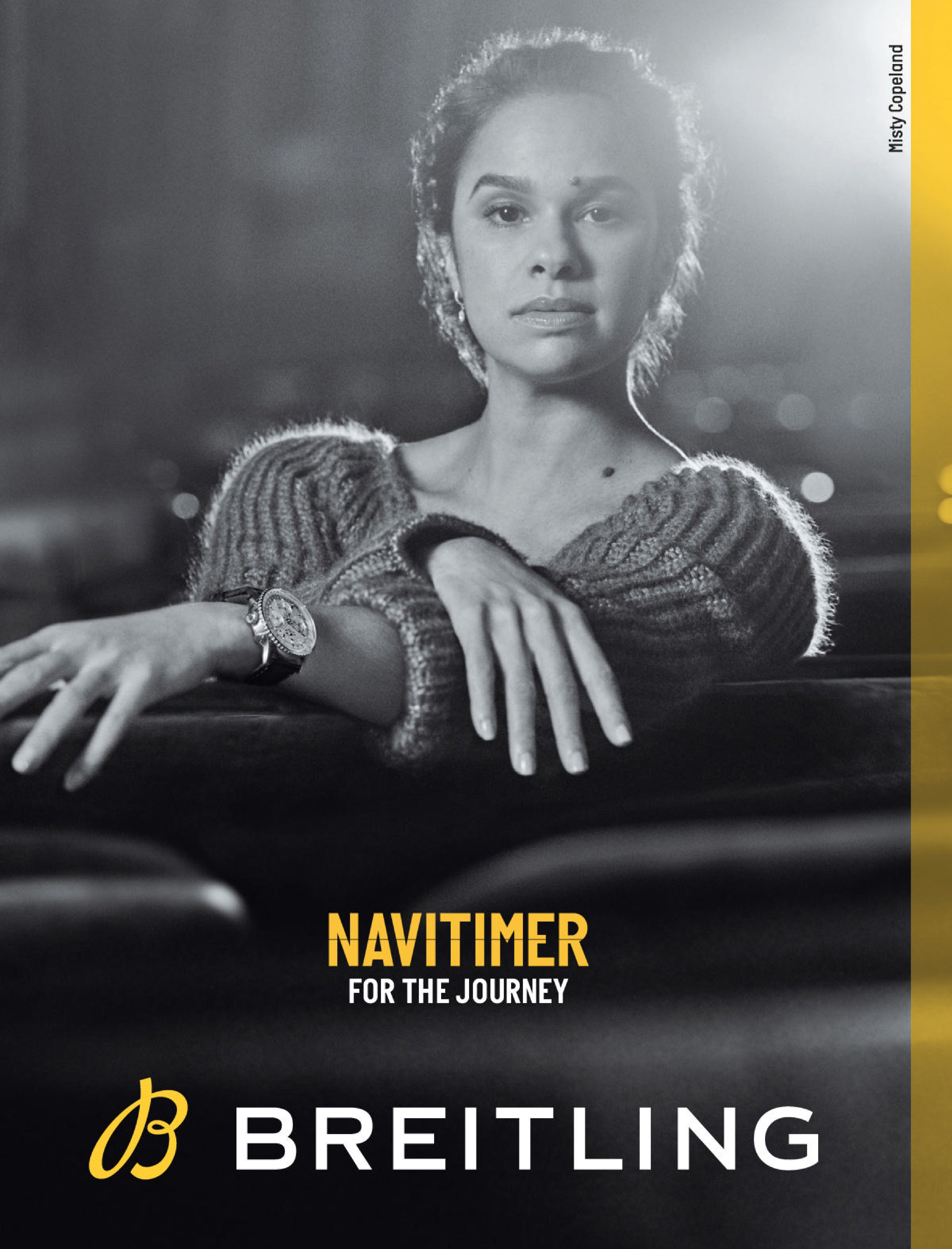
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By Dan O'Sullivan

Photograph by JEFF MARINI

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FROM THE EDITOR

The Death of a Giant

↑ Bill Zehme

BILL ZEHME, WHO DIED IN MARCH AT 64, was one of the great magazine writers of our time. He profiled Sinatra, Carson, Letterman, and so many other towering figures for the likes of *Rolling Stone* and *Esquire*. A Chicagoan, he also made his mark on this magazine. Ted Allen, a *Chicago* staffer before joining the original *Queer Eye* team, profiled him in 1996's "Bill Zehme Feels Your Pain," which you can now find on our website. More recently, Zehme came up with the concept for our monthly Backroom feature and handled the interviewing duties himself until cancer robbed him of that ability. And in 2017, with a mix of eloquence and brutal honesty, he wrote in our pages about coping with the disease that would ultimately take his life, in "What Cancer Taught Me," which I encourage you to read.

But what I will remember most about Bill is that he was a good friend. Emails and texts from him were treats to be savored, as he'd pour his heart and considerable skills into each one of them. The last time I saw him, before his illness made him a recluse, was at lunch at Green Street Smoked Meats. "Love you, man," he told me. And that was perhaps the biggest lesson I learned from him: Tell people what they mean to you before it's too late.

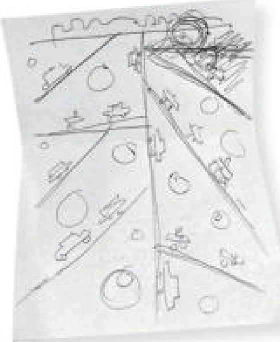
Terrance Noland
Editor in Chief

INSIDE PEEK

Ivan Brunetti

Food for Thought

IVAN BRUNETTI'S CARTOONS HAVE graced 17 covers of the *New Yorker* but never the front of his own city's magazine. So when *Chicago* design director David Syrek approached him about illustrating this month's cover, Brunetti did not hesitate. "I didn't even know what he wanted," says Brunetti, a professor at Columbia College. "I just agreed to it." That isn't to say it was easy. There were several "false starts," as he puts it, and at one point he was nearly ready to give up as he wrestled with questions of design and perspective in illustrating foodie road trips. "Then I took a small sheet of paper about the size of a Post-it and just tried to clear my mind," he recalls. "I did it in like 10 seconds, and came up with a way to get it all in there. It just kind of clicked." –NATHAN ANSELL



MAN OF VIRTUE

Contributing writer Mike Thomas was interviewing Erick Williams for this month's Backroom (page 108) when, midanswer, the chef bolted out the door of his restaurant, Virtue. Through the window, Thomas could see Williams, still wearing his white toque, schooling a child he'd seen walking across the outdoor tables. "He's all about making people better," Thomas says. "Sometimes he feels like he's coaching more than cheffing." –N.A.

PHOTOGRAPHY: (NOLAND) MICHAEL ZAJAKOWSKI; (ZEHME) CHRIS STRONG; (BRUNETTI, SKETCH) IVAN BRUNETTI

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TALK TO US

HOUSE DIVIDED
CHICAGO
BEST NEW RESTAURANTS

Amazing and tragic reporting on Chicago's house legacy.
@A_R_BERG
via Twitter

Whose House Is It?

Nice job by Mark Caro in covering the financial shenanigans that have undermined Chicago house music ["House Divided," April]. As someone who covered this scene for decades, I can confirm it was ever thus. Artists revered globally, but the middlemen sucked up the money. Music "industry" in a nutshell.
@gregkot *via Twitter*

Strong on hearsay. Weak on facts. Article should have been retitled "Black Artists Didn't Get a Cadillac."
@romiek *via Twitter*

CONFIDENTIAL CASH
Some find it hard to understand, but that's hardcore Chicago ["The Mystery Millionaire of Gage Park," March]. Do your work, mind your own business, save up for the "rainy day" that's sure to come. Polish proverb: *Co za dużo, to niezdrowo* ("Too much isn't healthy").
Tess Dennis Schlagheck
via Facebook

You ever come across a nonfiction story that hits you, personally, singularly, and specifically, square in the chest?
@timhodgson *via Twitter*

PEDALS VS. PEDDLERS
Chicago's bike network still sucks as it's being built out ["Bikes vs. Business," April]. This is like asking if interstate highways were bad for business if they were only built out a quarter mile at a time.
@OmariBeSaying
via Twitter

Yes, community input is always valuable, but the existence of a business on a street does not give it carte blanche to dictate the road safety and mobility needs of the residents and users of the street around them.
@johnsonloreno
via Twitter

I have no idea how European businesses stay afloat. Cities like Portland, Boston, New York are clearly crumbling under the weight of oppressive public transit and bicycle-friendly regimes. How can businesses function when low-speed transit brings customers to their doors?
Frank Ettinger
via Facebook

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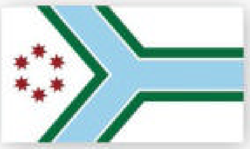
CORRECTION
In "House Divided," Rachael Cain was inaccurately described as a "former house artist." She continues to record music.

Q:

What's with the "Y" emblem on the new Cook County flag?

CITY OF BIG QUESTIONS
ANSWERED BY EDWARD ROBERT McCLELLAND

Its origins date back more than a hundred years, to the creation of a different flag. In 1892, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* held a contest to design a city flag. The winner was architect Alfred J. Roewad's entry, with its Y-shaped emblem representing the confluence of the North and South Branches of the Chicago River at Wolf Point. Though the city eventually went with blue stripes and red stars, Roewad's emblem became what's known as the municipal device, one required by local code to be displayed on all city vehicles.



So why isn't that enforced today? According to the city's website, "Hippies doomed the municipal device with their peace symbol," which was a little too close in appearance for some. "It was hated by Chicago police in the 1960s."

The emblem, which used to appear on the Chicago Public Library's logo (and can still be seen on a mosaic inside the Chicago Cultural Center's Preston Bradley Hall), was largely abandoned for official use. But look closely around town – say, at the ceiling mosaics on the first floor of City Hall, the Chicago Theatre marquee, and traffic control boxes – and you'll spot it. It's even making something of a comeback: In addition to being featured on the county flag, it was incorporated into the Bulls' City Edition jersey last year.

Send your questions about the Chicago area to emcclelland@chicagomag.com.

PHOTOGRAPH: MICHAEL ZAJAKOWSKI; (EMBLEM) COOK COUNTY GOVERNMENT

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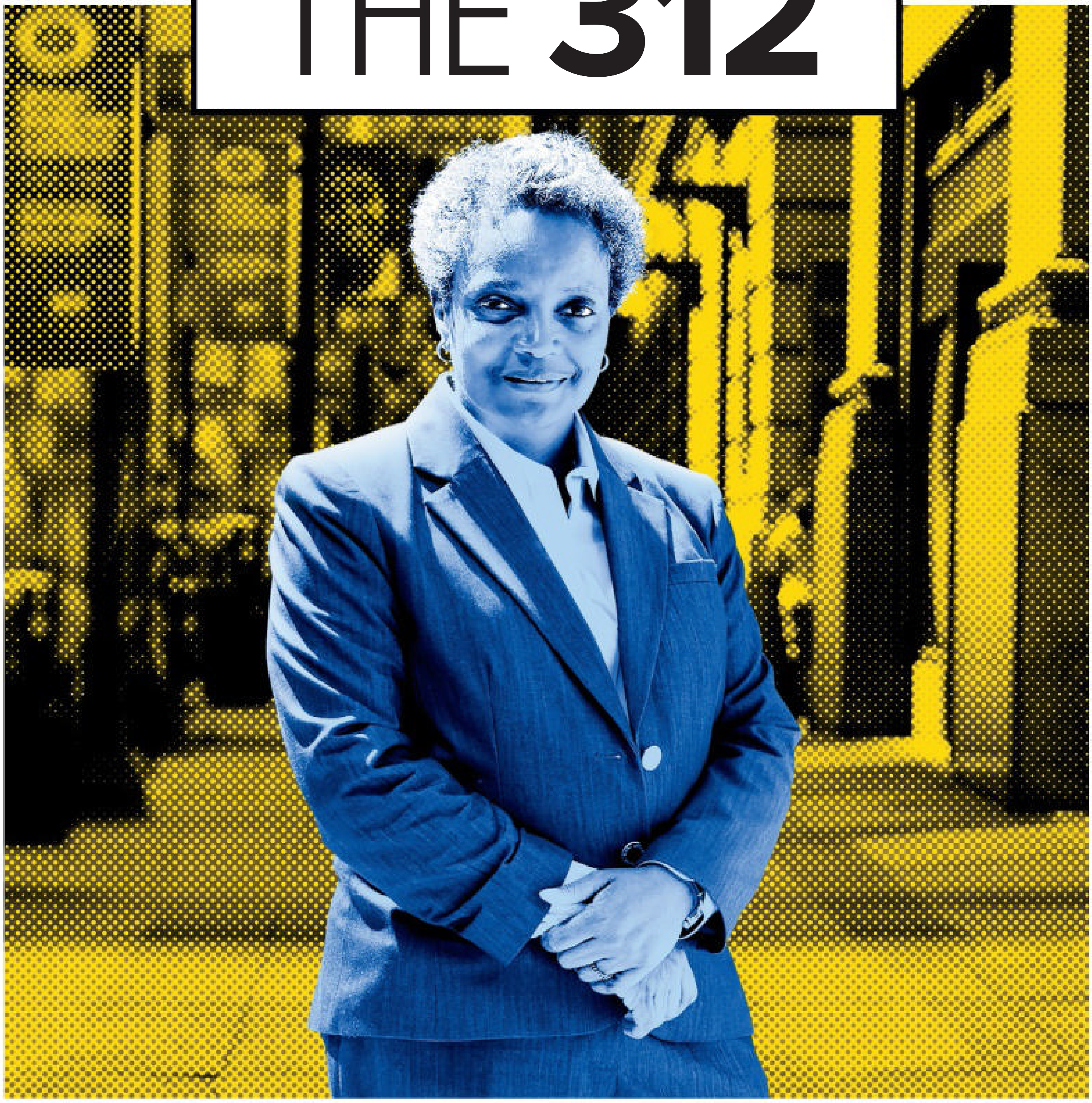


Lightfoot's Legacy

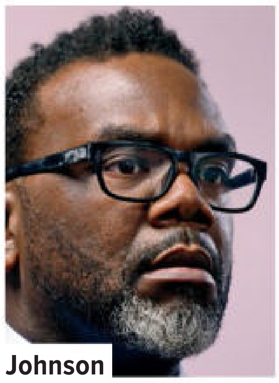
Yes, she did not play well with others, but the departing mayor also curbed ward fiefdoms and boosted neglected neighborhoods.

By EDWARD ROBERT McCLELLAND

LORI LIGHTFOOT DID NOT MAKE A LOT OF FRIENDS IN HER FOUR YEARS AS MAYOR. On election night in February, only two aldermen attended her party/wake at the Mid-America Carpenters Regional Council headquarters in River North: Scott Waguespack, her handpicked finance committee chair, and Jason Ervin, who was accompanying his wife, city treasurer and outspoken Lightfoot surrogate Melissa Conyears-Ervin.

"When I look back at the last four years, she has done things that upset the political apple cart, that upset a lot of people," Waguespack said as returns rolled in showing that the mayor wouldn't make the runoff. "She challenged the system in ways that had never been done before."

Lightfoot was elected as a political outsider but was defeated for a second term partly because she didn't act like a politician: That is, she was thin-skinned, petty, and vindictive, feuding with aldermen, business leaders, labor chiefs, and almost everyone else she dealt



Johnson

Talking Points

This month's conversation starters

1 Newly elected mayor **Brandon Johnson** will preside over his first City Council meeting this month. Restless alders have been plotting for greater independence from the incoming administration by establishing more committees and naming chairs themselves.

2 Ex–Edgewater resident **Aleksandar Hemon**, now a professor at Princeton University, returns for the Chicago Humanities Festival May 6 to discuss his latest novel, *The World and All That It Holds*.

3 Before he died last September, pianist **Ramsey Lewis** sat down with author Aaron Cohen to tell his life story, from a Chicago housing project to musical stardom. *Gentleman of Jazz: A Life in Music* is out May 9.

4 Given up on NFL dreams but not on pro football? The **XFL**, which relaunched this year, will scout a May 14 combine at North Central College in Naperville.

PHOTOGRAPHY: (LIGHTFOOT) CHRIS WALKER/*CHICAGO TRIBUNE*; (JOHNSON) JOHN J. KIM/*CHICAGO TRIBUNE*

Illustration by JOE DARROW

with. But what has gotten lost amid the many postmortems trashing her tenure is that she changed Chicago in ways that only an outsider could.

POLITICAL REFORM

Lightfoot ran on ending the Chicago Way, as epitomized by longtime alderman Ed Burke, indicted in 2019 for shaking down a Burger King owner for a building permit. On her first day in office, she sent a message about power dynamics by signing an executive order instructing city departments not to defer to aldermen. She also passed an ethics reform ordinance prohibiting aldermen from outside employment that conflicts with the city's interests, including handling property tax appeals, as Burke, a real estate attorney, made millions of dollars doing.

> **"No one is going to be able to go back to the way Ed Burke did things."**
>
> *—Joanna Klonsky, a policy consultant to Lightfoot*

She did not succeed in ending altogether the practice of "aldermanic prerogative," which gives ward bosses veto power over all projects on their turf; the City Council resisted her attempt to take away their power over zoning. But her changes made an impact. "No one is going to be able to go back to the way Ed Burke did things," says Joanna Klonsky, a policy consultant to Lightfoot.

NEIGHBORHOOD INVESTMENT

Lightfoot probably wants to be remembered most for Invest South/West, which, according to her office, has committed $2.2 billion in public and private investment to neglected African American and Latino areas. "Nobody since the King riots," which burned out the West Side in 1968, "has invested in those neighborhoods," says Hermene Hartman, publisher of *N'Digo* magazine. "Those neighborhoods have been dismissed, ignored. The dollars she's put in for renovation, innovation, newness, that's a renaissance."

In Auburn Gresham, construction began last summer on the $43 million Imagine Evergreen – 58 units of affordable housing and commercial space to be occupied by a supper club and a West African food purveyor. In Englewood, Lightfoot held a groundbreaking last September for a $14 million "eco-food hub" in an abandoned firehouse, though the neighborhood is still waiting for work to begin. And for more than 50 years, Roseland and Altgeld Gardens on the Far South Side had been promised L stops by various city leaders; Lightfoot made it, as she put it, the city's No. 1 transportation priority, and this year's proposed federal budget includes $350 million for extending the Red Line from 95th to 130th Street.

"Lightfoot did a great job of sounding the alarm about the investments needed," says Asiaha Butler, CEO of the Resident Association of Greater Englewood. "If the South and West Sides fail, Chicago fails. I think all of us would like to see some things materialize."

LGBTQ+ RIGHTS

The election of Lightfoot, an open lesbian, was a "watershed moment" for Chicago's LGBTQ+ community, says Brian Johnson, CEO of Equality Illinois: "Before, there was this narrative to LGBTQ+ candidates: You can't win over Bridgeport, Bronzeville, Belmont Cragin. When she won every ward, that created a sense of possibility for other LGBTQ+ candidates. The fact that this ceiling was broken by a Black lesbian was really important."

Once in office, Lightfoot passed a resolution to drive more city contracts to LGBTQ+-owned enterprises and, for the first time, to collect data on how many the city does business with. The local trans rights movement also gained momentum under Lightfoot's watch: Her 2023 budget included $75,600 to evaluate hiring practices with the goal of bringing more transgender employees to City Hall and to support the Chicago Therapy Collective's Hire Trans Now initiative, which encourages employers to recruit more trans candidates.

A CASINO DEAL

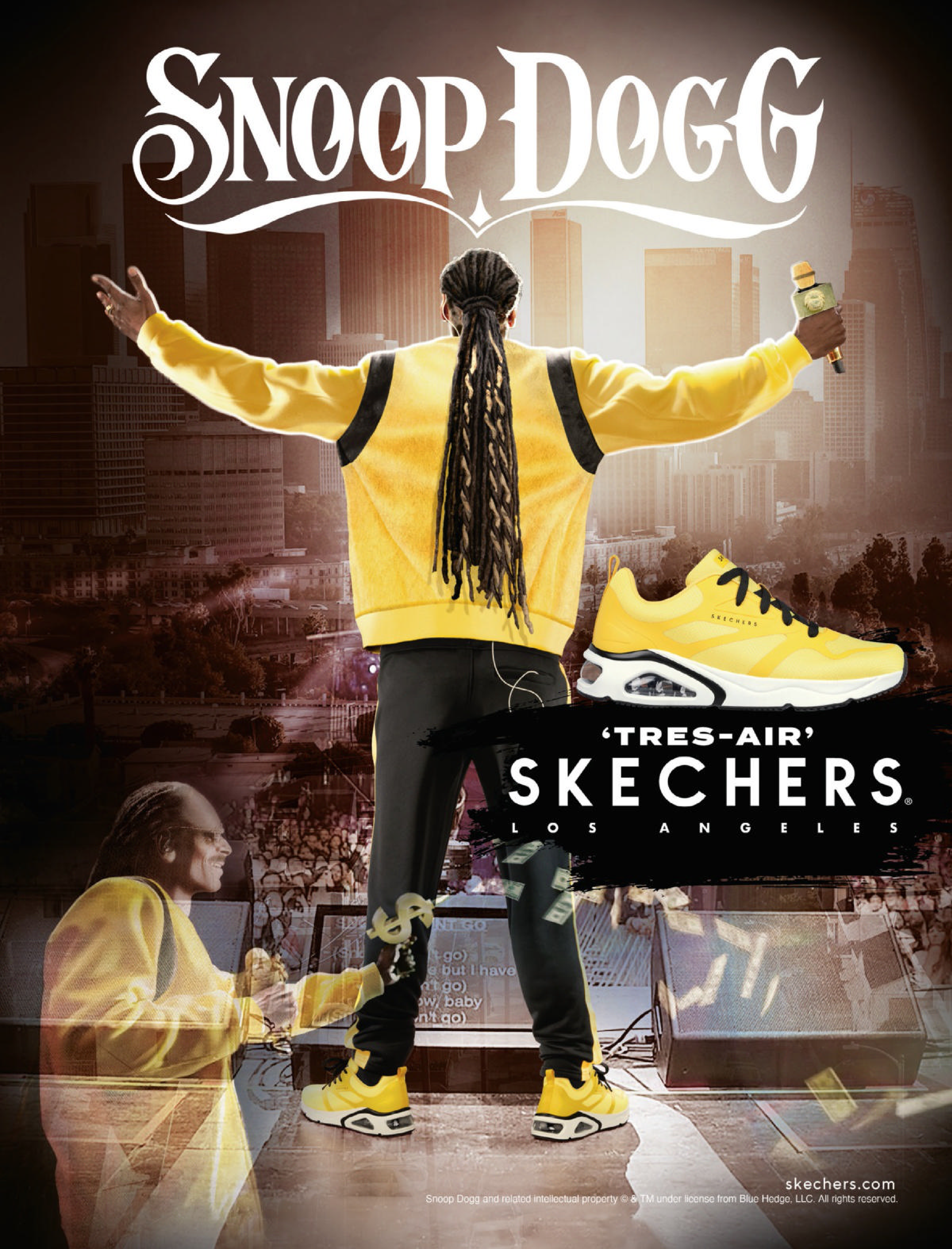
Mayors Richard M. Daley and Rahm Emanuel wanted a casino in Chicago. They didn't get one. Lightfoot successfully lobbied the General Assembly to approve a casino, which Bally's will build on the site of the *Chicago Tribune*'s printing plant in River West. Lightfoot also made the casino an easier sell to the City Council by negotiating an agreement with Bally's not to interfere with union organizing efforts among the expected 3,000 permanent employees. "That really was a game-changer in the way that the aldermen were seeing it," says Bob Reiter, president of the Chicago Federation of Labor.

WORKERS' RIGHTS

During Lightfoot's term, the city raised the minimum wage to $15 an hour in 2021 – four years ahead of the state – and passed the Fair Workweek ordinance, requiring employers of health care, hotel, restaurant, and other lower-wage workers to provide them with "predictable work schedules" and to compensate them for changes in those schedules. Labor advocates had failed to push that ordinance through Emanuel's City Council. Lightfoot also began a universal basic income pilot program, providing 5,000 low-wage households with $500 a month for a year.

Reiter thinks Lightfoot's upbringing played a role in her enthusiasm for such measures: "Growing up in a working-class family, she understands what it means and how transformational it can be to someone's family when they have an opportunity to level the playing field."

Lightfoot was not a traditional politician. That was her undoing. But the qualities that made her different from her predecessors led her to create a Chicago that a traditional politician never would have.



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VOX

This Dreamer Cometh

In his new biography of MLK, Jonathan Eig presents a radical yet human portrait of the crusader.

Interview by LOLLY BOWEAN

THOUGH HE WAS BORN more than 150 years after the Declaration of Independence was signed, Martin Luther King Jr. should be considered a founding father of the United States, Chicago writer Jonathan Eig argues in his book *King: A Life*, out May 16. After all, King led a movement that forced the country to live up to its creed that all men are created equal. "If you believe that those documents really are committed to the life of all and freedom and rights of all citizens, then it was incomplete until Black people began to demand their own inclusion," Eig says.

His sweeping biography chronicles the civil rights activist's journey, starting long before his birth and ending with his assassination on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis. In this poetically written and deeply layered life history, Eig reshapes the image of King from a pacifist preacher to a radical revolutionary.

Q: So many books have been done on Martin Luther King. Why write a biography of him now?

A: I was shocked to discover that it had been 35 years, and now 40 years, since the last King biography. That's just much too long. And in that time, we've turned him into a two-dimensional figure. We've watered down his story – his radicalism in particular. We've turned him into a national holiday and a monument. We start learning about him in kindergarten, and sometimes we don't get more complicated than that kindergarten lesson. I wanted to write a book that would be more intimate than the King books that have come before. I want you to experience the highs and lows, and I want you to cry at the end when we lose him. There was also an opportunity to do it now while there were still people alive who knew him really well: his associates, family members. And that window was closing fast.

Q: How did you go about reporting the book?

A: I began six years ago. My first interviews were with Dick Gregory, Harry Belafonte, Andrew Young, and John Lewis. I traveled around the country before COVID, interviewing as many of these people as I could. I got to know people like June Dobbs Butts, a good friend of King's from childhood. And I walked through

Photograph by JACLYN RIVAS

the houses where he lived and walked through the streets where he played as a kid. It was essential to put myself in those places. I also did lots of archival research, including going through new FBI documents that had been declassified and going through this amazing collection of papers at the Schomburg Center in Harlem. My favorite part was the interviews. The opportunity to interview people who knew Dr. King – what a thrill, what an honor to record their stories, knowing that time was running out.

> **“King showed enormous courage in coming [to Chicago] and saying to the nation that Northern racism is more intransigent and more damaging than Southern racism.”**

Q: King said he hadn’t seen such hostility and hatefulness as he did when marching in Chicago. What did you learn about his time here?

A: We do King a disservice when we talk about how he failed in Chicago or how Mayor Richard J. Daley outsmarted him. King showed enormous courage in coming here and saying to the nation that Northern racism is more intransigent and more damaging than Southern racism and you need to open your eyes to it. He came here and offered concrete solutions. There weren’t just a bunch of marches to call attention to the problems. He offered the city steps for improving, and the city turned him down. Daley shut it down. That’s not King’s fault. That’s our own fault, our leaders’ fault, because they weren’t serious about making change. There’s a reason Chicago remains one of the most segregated cities in the country. We had an opportunity to do something about that when King was here. We’ve had many opportunities since then. But change is hard – there has to be a will for it, and Daley clearly didn’t have the will for it.

Q: Your epigraph comes from Genesis: “Behold, this dreamer cometh … Let us slay him … And we shall see what will become of his dreams.” As you tell the story of King, from his birth and formative college years to his role as an activist and civil rights leader and then ultimately to his assassination, the pace and intensity rises, crescendoes, and then falls. Did you intend to tell the story in the format of a Gospel sermon?

A: You can’t write about King without writing about God, without writing about his beliefs. Jesus guided so much of what he did. There came a point in the book – the chapter after he gave the “I Have a Dream” speech – when the FBI began to turn up the heat and intentionally set out to destroy him. I was getting angry and I began to feel like I was preaching a bit. I had a sermon. But I’m not actually preaching. The facts tell the story. I did begin to feel really like something important was happening. We went from a moment of incredible hope – where many people feel like this country might turn a corner and overcome some of its racism – and our own government decided it was not going to let that happen. That it was going to take this man down before he became too powerful. I became very emotional about that, and that’s when I knew what the book was about. And that’s when I found and added the epigraph.

Q: Not only do you chronicle King’s victories, you document his most troubling moments, like his extramarital affairs. Why go there?

A: I know that some people see King as a saint, and it’s difficult to acknowledge that our saints have flaws. But King acknowledged that himself. He didn’t get into details, but in many, many sermons he admitted that he was weak and that, like all of us, he struggled. When we are honest about it, when we acknowledge that our heroes have flaws, then we can better emulate them. We can try to live up to what they inspire us to do and not feel like we have to be perfect, too.

PHOTOGRAPH: *CHICAGO TRIBUNE*

A Taste of *King: A Life*

■ A sample from Eig’s chapter about the reverend moving into a North Lawndale apartment in 1966 to bring attention to redlining in Chicago and living conditions in its blighted neighborhoods:

On his first night in Chicago, King held an open house, inviting neighbors to visit. He talked for a long time with six members of a local gang, the Vice Lords, about Gandhi and the concept of peaceful protest. Everyone, including King, sat on the floor. “We would say, ‘We respect what you’re saying, but if someone hits me, I’m going to hit him back,’ ” recalled Lawrence Johnson, one of the Vice Lords. King argued that the gang members would never win that way. The police would always have more power. “Hearing this, seeing him, being young, living in a depressive life in America, you couldn’t help but to fall in love with him,” Johnson said.

Despite the admonishment, the Vice Lords believed there was at least one thing they *could* do better than the police: protect Dr. King.

“I think he thought that, too,” said Johnson.

THE TWO-MINUTE GUIDE

Rowe v. Raoul

While we await a pivotal court ruling, here's all you need to know about Illinois's plan to bail on cash bail.

By GRACE PERRY

THE BACKGROUND

SAFE-T FIRST

First, let's take a moment to appreciate the punny acronym we're working with here. The Safety, Accountability, Fairness, and Equity-Today Act, or SAFE-T Act, is a state law that reforms several aspects of the criminal justice system, from policing to sentencing. Much of it went into effect in 2021. But one section, the Pretrial Fairness Act—specifically, the provision that would eliminate cash bail—has become a political lightning rod statewide.

If you've ever watched a single police procedural show, you are acquainted with the bail system. In essence: Innocent until proven guilty, but also, you know, please actually come to court. Sounds reasonable. Or does it? Folks who can't afford bail end up sitting in jail. America, baby! Also, the Philippines—the only other country with a commercial-bondsmen-dominated process.

Many states have reformed their cash bail systems, but Illinois would be the first to abolish it. Whether a defendant withers away in jail before trial would no longer hinge on their income stream but on whether a judge thinks they pose a threat or might skip town.

THE CONTROVERSY

FAIR VS. FIRM

Fans of cash bail argue it keeps dangerous criminals off the street, while critics say it punishes the poor. Yep, it's civil rights vs. tough-on-crime rhetoric all over again. If there's anything Americans love these days, it's a reboot of a bad old show. Smash-cut to the Tough-on-Crime guys taking the SAFE-T Act to court.

In a case combining lawsuits across 64 counties, Kankakee County state's attorney Jim Rowe contends that ending cash bail violates the Illinois Constitution. Late last year, Thomas Cunningham, a conservative Kankakee County judge, agreed. Attorney General Kwame Raoul appealed Cunningham's ruling to the Illinois Supreme Court, which heard oral arguments in mid-March. A decision is expected this summer.

THE LEGAL ARGUMENTS

WHO'S GOT THE POWER?

Rowe contends that the judiciary's right to set cash bail is enshrined in the Illinois Constitution; thus it could be abolished only by amendment, which would require a statewide referendum. The AG's office counters that, sure, judges have the power to ensure that defendants show up in court, but there are other methods: electronic monitoring, home confinement, regular check-ins—*so many ways to surveil citizens these days!*

A POSSIBLE OUTCOME

DUCKING A DECISION

Since Democrats outnumber Republicans five to two on the state supreme court, the justices probably won't strike down the act. More likely they will punt. Chief Justice Mary Jane Theis hammered Rowe on whether he even had legal standing to bring a case. His response: "If we're regulated by the act, then we are a proper party to that litigation." Theis sounded unconvinced. Annoyed, even! Politically, the court's safest move is to throw the case out without taking a stand on cash bail. That's good old American justice for you! C

Illustration by ROBERT NEUBECKER

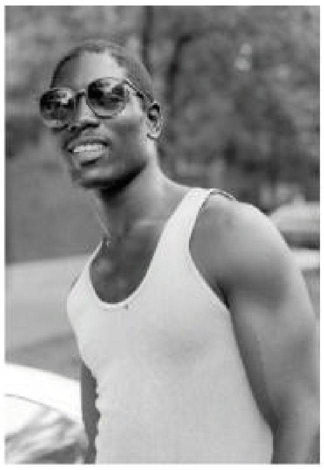
KONGKEE: WARRING STATES CYBERPUNK

Ancient History Meets
Futurist Fantasy

A dazzling electronic art installation combining ancient poetry and modern anime—part comic book, part motion picture, part meditation on history.

SHAHIDUL ALAM: SINGED BUT NOT BURNT

Renowned photographer and activist Shahidul Alam exposes the resilience of Bangladeshi people and their continued struggle for freedom over four decades.



PATRIC McCOY: TAKE MY PICTURE

Traveling Chicago by bike, always with his camera, Patric McCoy captures 1980s Black gay Chicago, creating a poignant marker of place, time and memory.

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IMAGE CREDITS: (KONGKEE) *The Singer*, 2018, by Kongkee (Kong Khong-chang 江記; b. 1977, active Hong Kong and London). Courtesy of the artist and Penguin Lab. Copyright © 2018 the artist. Detail. **(ALAM)** *Woman Wading in Flood*, 1988, by Shahidul Alam, Courtesy of the artist. **(McCOY)** *Jeff*, 1985, by Patric McCoy, Courtesy of the artist.

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Kongkee: Warring States Cyberpunk is organized
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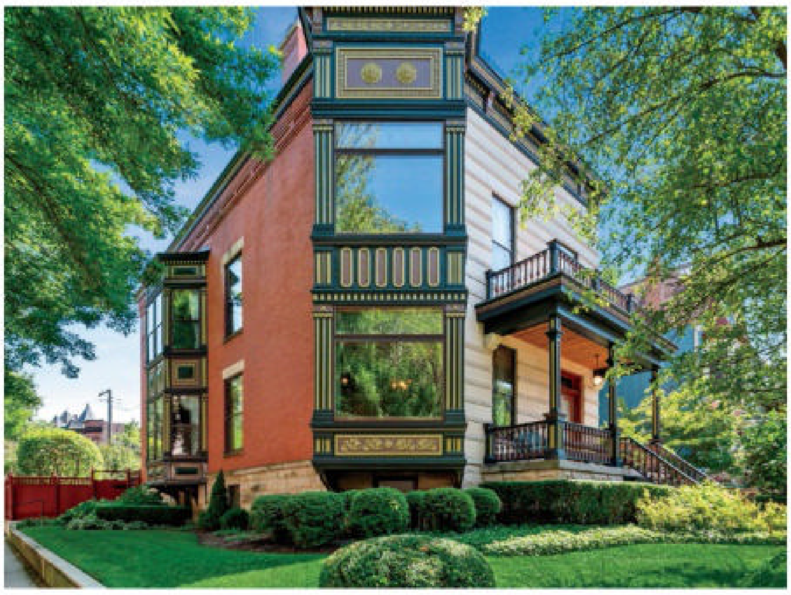
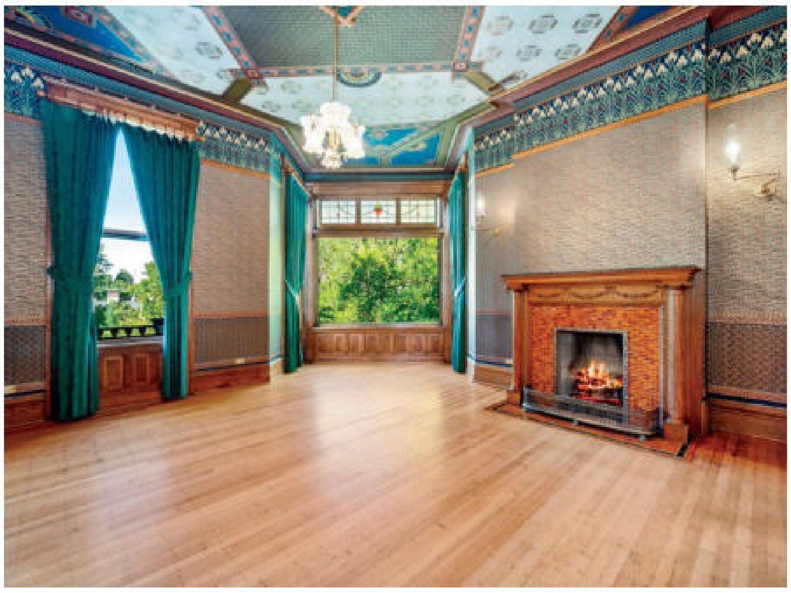
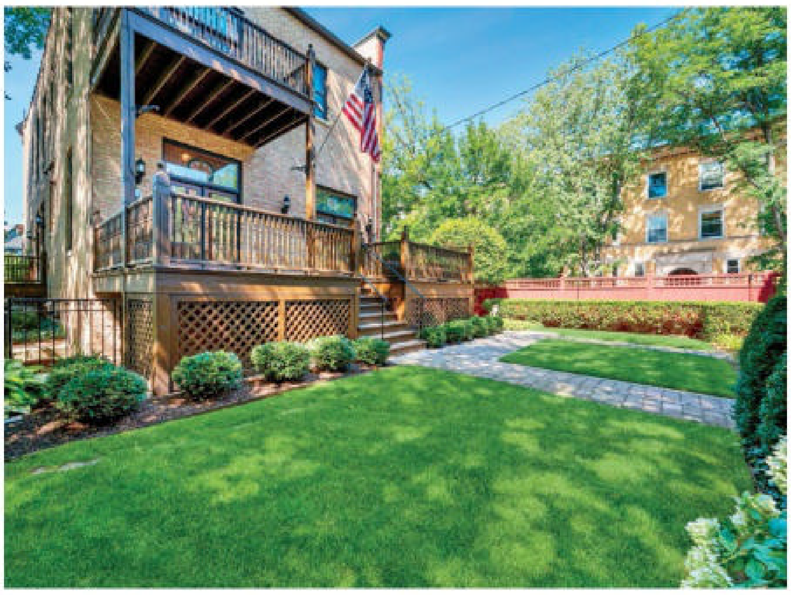
LISTING OF THE MONTH

Victorian Secret

A Queen Anne serves up a piece of history in Lake View. By CARISA CRAWFORD CHAPPELL







A GRAND 1894 QUEEN Anne Victorian home, saved from neglect more than 20 years ago, sits prominently on a corner lot at 4125 North Greenview Avenue in Lake View's Graceland West neighborhood. Owner Doug Dinnella worked with preservation experts to renovate it into such an eye-catching residence that the state's Historic Preservation Division deemed it architecturally significant.

It's impossible to miss this home, not only because of its landscaped grounds and period details but also because it sits on one of the largest lots in the area: 9,339 square feet, equal to almost three standard city lots. The welcoming porch and intricate designs around huge windows make the place a showstopper, one now on the market for $2.1 million.

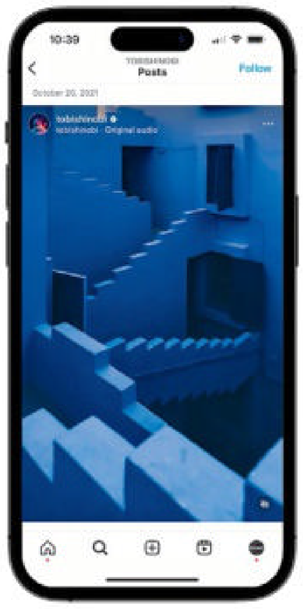
The four-bedroom, five-bathroom home was designed as a two-flat. At the preservation division's request, two entry doors remain visible from outside to keep the feel of the original architecture. An elegant entryway opens into one of two parlors, where custom millwork draws the eye to the walls, staircase, and 11-foot ceilings. The first floor is appointed with ornate stained glass, ceiling medallions, chandeliers designed to be lit by electricity or natural gas, and Bradbury & Bradbury wallpaper reproducing 19th-century forest and wildlife designs.

A refinished oak box-beam ceiling and built-in hutch are original to the dining room, where there's also a vintage brass chandelier from Spain. Pocket doors open into a modern sunroom and kitchen, featuring granite countertops. The 3,600-square-foot home has two fireplaces, one with porcelain tiles in a period pattern imported from England.

Just a 10-minute walk from this piece of history is Graceland Cemetery, where the original builder, Henry P. Carll, is buried. C

Where It's @

By CORLI JAY



INSTAGRAM HANDLE
@tobishinobi

FOLLOWERS 170,000

■ **Who's behind it** Tobi Shonibare, 40, a photographer from London now living in the West Loop

■ **How it started** While working as a lawyer in the U.K., Shonibare felt unsatisfied. "I eased my frustrations by picking up a camera, teaching myself how to shoot," he says. He posted images on Instagram as Tobi Shinobi. After building a following, he was hired in 2017 by ad agency Havas as a photographer and videographer in Chicago. He now works as a creative strategist for TikTok.

■ **His style** Shonibare likes to shoot places that "look surreal but are real." One photo he took of a staircase in Spain "reminds people of that painting by M.C. Escher that has steps going off in all different directions."

■ **Popular post** His shot of Lincoln Park Zoo's honeycomb-looking pavilion got 20,900 likes.

PHOTOGRAPHY: (HOUSE) ANNE HILDRETH; (INSTAGRAM) TOBI SHONIBARE

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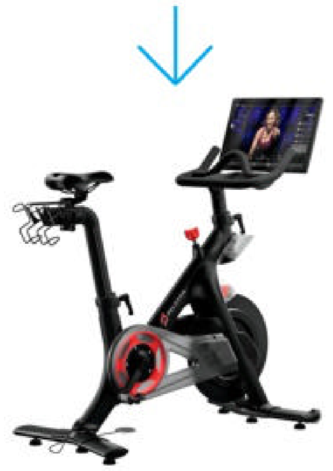
THE REGIMEN

Jake Hamilton

Entertainment reporter, movie fan, nap embracer

By WEB BEHRENS

I’M ONE OF THOSE OBNOXIOUS, annoying people who genuinely loves coming to work,” proclaims Fox 32 entertainment anchor Jake Hamilton. A Texas native and huge film buff, he studied broadcast journalism at the University of Houston but afterward traded Lone Star sunshine for Windy City weather. Now 35, Hamilton has logged nearly a decade’s worth of interviews with A-list stars for the morning show *Good Day Chicago* (plus his podcast, *Reel Blend*) and has won three local Emmys. His job requires that he wake well before dawn, and he walks from his Streeterville home to the TV studio – it’s “almost a mile to the step,” he says. “Whenever I consider living anywhere else, I think, Well, if I do that, I’ll have to add two more miles to my steps every day.”



WHAT’S YOUR FAVORITE WAY TO EXERCISE?
“During the pandemic, I was one of those people who bought a Peloton. I go to the gym in my building in the afternoon and use the machines, then pop back to my apartment and bang out some Peloton miles.”

HOW DO YOU FIND ENERGY TO WORK OUT?
“God, do I love a nap day! If I can sleep for 90 minutes in the early afternoon, then I’m more likely to go to the gym.”

HOW HAS YOUR LIFESTYLE CHANGED OVER THE YEARS?
“Five years ago, I went through a bad breakup and turned 30. I was never a gym guy and didn’t have to watch what I ate, but I thought, I want to feel good mentally and physically. I knew I had to change my diet because workouts won’t matter if I couple them with nightly Chipotle bowls. I found a way to take things I loved and make them healthier. I still love chicken Caesar salad, but I use light dressing with lemon juice and swap romaine for kale and arugula. But on the weekend, if my friends want pizza … absolutely, we eat pizza.”

YOU WATCH MOVIES FOR A LIVING. WHAT’S YOUR GO-TO SNACK?
“Popcorn could consume most of my diet. Instead, I treat it as something for a special occasion. Checking out the newest superhero blockbuster? Sure, let’s grab some popcorn. Small, independent drama? I’ll grab a salad when I get home.”

PHOTOGRAPH: PELOTON

Photograph by LISA PREDKO

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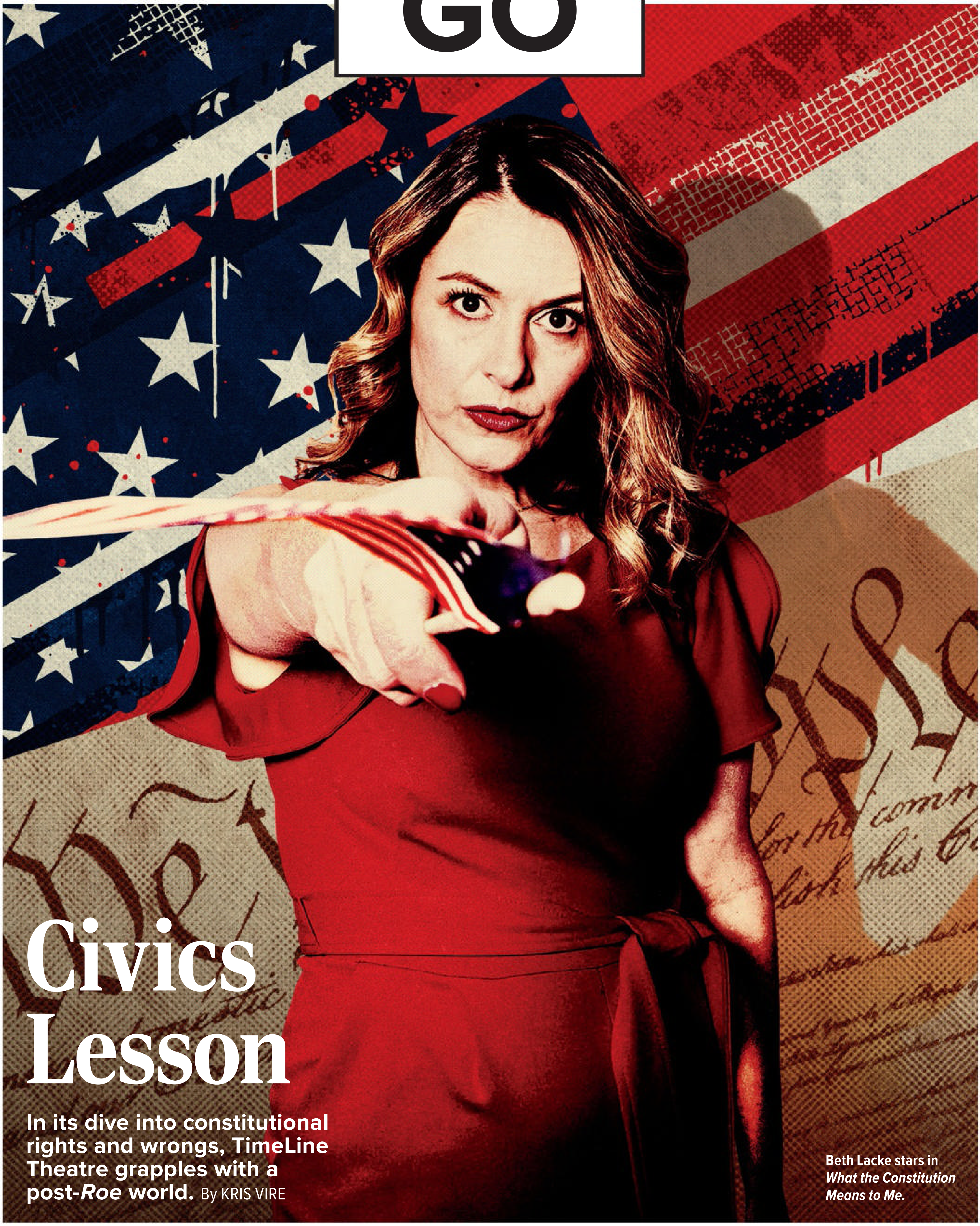

Civics Lesson

In its dive into constitutional rights and wrongs, TimeLine Theatre grapples with a post-*Roe* world. By KRIS VIRE

Beth Lacke stars in *What the Constitution Means to Me.*

PHOTOGRAPH: (LACKE) JOE MAZZA/BRAVE LUX

Illustration by SEAN McCABE

EVERY TIME I WALK out there, the world has changed.” That’s playwright and actor Heidi Schreck in a voice-over intro to a filmed version of *What the Constitution Means to Me*, her inventive theatrical exploration of how the country’s founding document and the courts have, and mostly haven’t, protected the rights of women and other marginalized groups.

Young

The play won’t let us wallow. “It does need to have hope,” says director Helen Young.

At the time that the Broadway production was shot for Amazon Prime Video in 2019, she notes, she had been performing versions of her near-solo show for a decade: “during presidential elections, Supreme Court hearings, marches, and protests.” Now, as TimeLine Theatre Company prepares to mount the first Chicago-based production, May 10 to July 2, the world has shifted again, in a way that couldn’t be more central to the play.

In Schreck’s script as it was frozen just a few years ago, the character Heidi lives in an America where *Roe v. Wade* is the law of the land; her own decision to have an abortion at 21 is one of the story’s tent poles. TimeLine, among the first regional theaters to license the Tony- and Pulitzer-nominated work, has to figure out what *Constitution* means in a post-*Roe* world. “Every discussion I’ve had with anyone about this production, we’re all talking about that,” says Chicago actor Beth Lacke, who will be filling Schreck’s shoes. “After *Roe*’s been overturned, how does this affect the structure of the play, the emotionality of the play?”

Constitution was a late addition to TimeLine’s slate, but the company – whose mission revolves around plays rooted in history that wrestle with political and social issues – leaped to secure the rights when they became available. TimeLine turned to local director Helen Young, who helmed *The Chinese Lady* for the company last spring. “I read it and was immediately intrigued. Then I saw the Prime Video version and cried and was just thrilled.”

The play is unconventionally structured. Heidi speaks to the audience directly, recounting how she paid for college with scholarships earned by competing in American Legion speech contests. Though her prizewinning oration in response to the titular prompt is long since lost, Heidi tells us she wants to re-create what she might have said at 15, complete with a legionnaire keeping time (played here by Lookingglass Theatre ensemble member Raymond Fox). But even as Heidi tries to conjure her teenage self, the grown-up version keeps breaking through with complicating facts and anecdotes: personal stories of her own abortion and her family’s history of domestic violence, cogent legal analysis of the Ninth and 14th Amendments, and a deep dive into a particularly infuriating Supreme Court case.

If this sounds like a lecture, fear not: Schreck’s treatment is as funny as it is furious. But Lacke knows that Heidi’s abortion story will hit differently these days. “There’s now a touch of privilege to the piece,” she says. In the play, Heidi acknowledges the advantages she has as a white woman over Black and Indigenous women, trans people, and others who might feel less safe going to the police about an abusive situation. Look for that theme to carry into abortion choices. “Tell everyone to pack a flask,” Lacke jokes.

But as Young notes, the play won’t let us wallow. “It does need to have hope,” she says. Schreck provides that in the form of an even more unconventional ending, in which Heidi faces off against a teenage debater (played alternately by high schoolers Sophie Ackerman and Makalah Simpson). The question: Should we keep trying to improve our old, imperfect Constitution, or scrap it and start fresh?

Ultimately, the audience is asked to decide. “I hope that it inspires people to recognize the power they have, through elections, through *running* for election – that this is a living, breathing document,” Lacke says. Adds Young: “We look back on the Constitution and think it was all these really smart people designing things. But no, it was fighting. It was gritty. It was dirty. And it was won sentence by sentence. It’s the same thing now.” ■

PHOTOGRAPH: ZOE McKENZIE PHOTOGRAPHY

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AGENDA

Top 10 reasons to fill up your calendar this month

By KRIS VIRE

1
2
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CRITICAL COMEDY

In the new iO show *Satirical Race Theory*, an all-star team of Black improvisers sends up contemporary discourse around politics and culture. Catch it now, before Florida lawmakers figure out how to ban it. *Through July 1. ioimprov.com*

BETWEEN THE LINES

San Francisco's Alonzo King Lines Ballet returns to the Harris Theater for the first time since 2015 with *Deep River*. The new evening-length piece is set to a score by jazz pianist Jason Moran that draws on Black spirituals. *May 5–6. harristheaterchicago.org*

ASIAN CREATION

The inaugural APIDA Arts Festival highlights work by Asian, Pacific Islander, and Desi or South Asian Americans. The three-day fest features both performances and hands-on workshops; most events are free but require advance registration. *May 5–7. apidaarts.org*

DESIGN FOR LIVING

Get home decor inspo or just ogle some house porn at the Lake Forest Showhouse & Gardens, wherein teams of interior and landscape designers make over a stately suburban manor. The biennial event is a fundraiser for the Infant Welfare Society of Chicago. *May 6–June 4. lakeforestshowhouse.com*

STORM'S A-BREWING

Playwright Joshua Allen's Chicago-set marriage story *The Last Pair of Earlies* marked a deeply moving return to the stage for Raven Theatre in 2021. *The October Storm*, Allen's follow-up about a multigenerational family on the South Side in the 1960s, should be on your radar. *May 11–June 25. raventheatre.com*

TOON TOWN

Anime Central, billed as the Midwest's largest anime and manga convention, brings hordes of creators, retailers, and cosplaying fans of Japanese-inspired cartoons and comics to Rosemont's Donald E. Stephens Convention Center. *May 19–21. acen.org*

WRIGHT ON TIME

Frank Lloyd Wright fans can gawk at the many Oak Park houses the architect designed anytime—from the outside. But during the Wright Plus Housewalk, you can tour the interiors of three FLW residences and five other historic homes. *May 20. flwright.org*

MOLE FOR DAYS

An early entry in Chicago's summer street fair season, Pilsen's Mole de Mayo Festival celebrates a staple sauce of Mexican cuisine. In addition to food vendors plying their mole variations, look for two music stages and a lucha libre wrestling ring. *May 26–28. moledemayo.org*

OUT OF THE WOODS

The Morton Arboretum is both the host and the materials supplier for *Of the Earth*, a new exhibition by Polish American artist Olga Ziemska, who creates dramatic, large-scale sculptures from reclaimed tree branches. *May 26–Spring 2025. mortonarb.org*

SKY'S THE LIMIT

At age 21, Hunter Hayes became the youngest male solo act to top *Billboard*'s country songs chart with his 2012 single "Wanted." Now he's following the lead of former tour mate Taylor Swift, embracing a poppier vibe on his latest album, *Red Sky*. Check out his new direction as Hayes plays the Vic. *May 30. jamusa.com*

PHOTOGRAPHY: (IO THEATER) KAYO; (APIDA FESTIVAL) WILLIAM FREDERKING; (MOLE) STAREVENTS; (HAYES) ANDREW ZAEH

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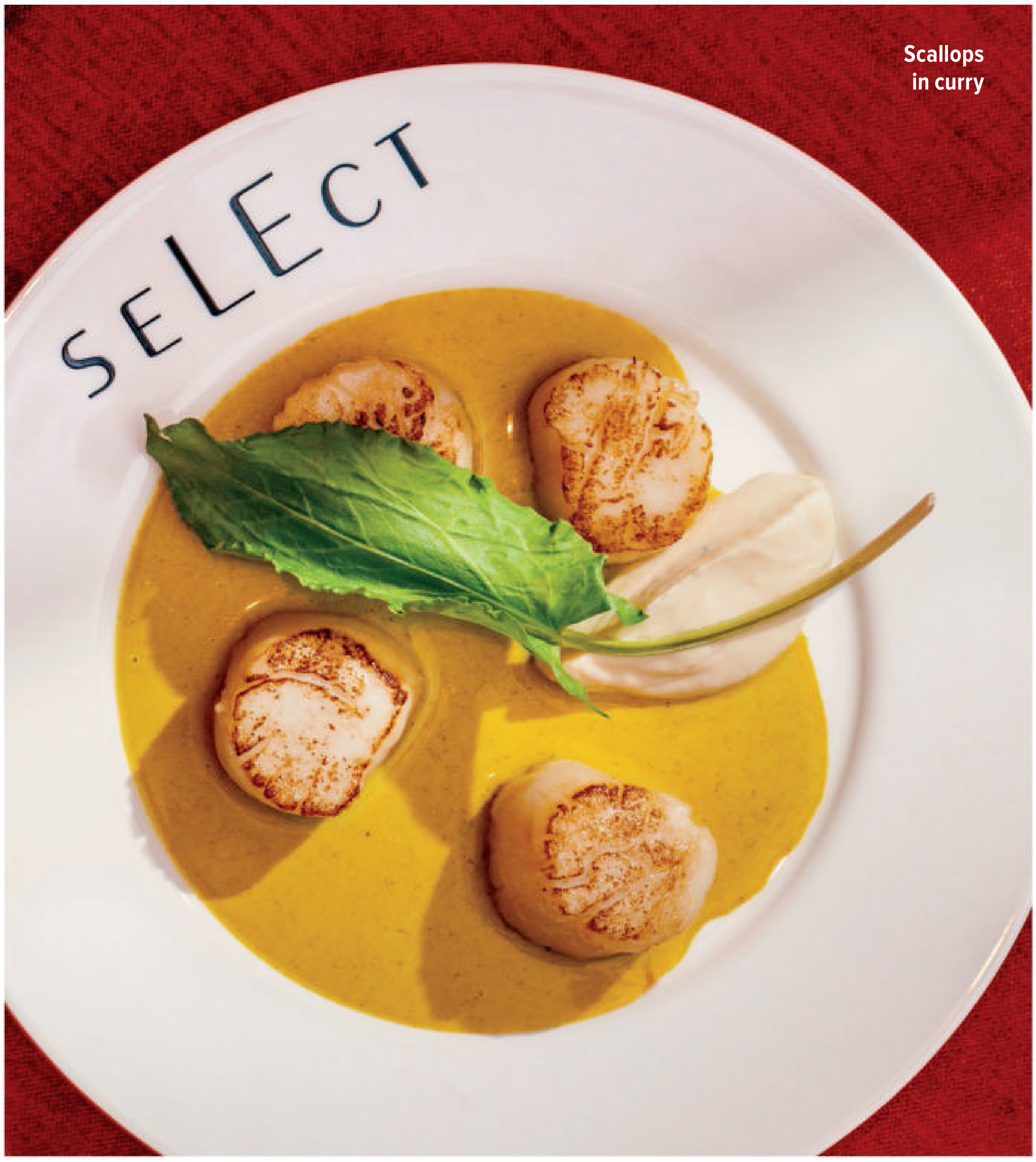
French Trip

Le Select, the glitzy new restaurant from Daniel Rose and Boka Restaurant Group, stumbles out of the gate.

A REVIEW BY **JOHN KESSLER**

Photography by JEFF MARINI


Scallops in curry

YEARS AGO WE WERE ON vacation in Paris when my wife was called home for a family emergency. I found myself alone with our three tween girls and no agenda. Over the next few days, we became regulars at the boisterous brasserie around the corner from our hotel. Good move. The adventurous child tried her first foie gras, the carnivorous one ate steak frites, and the picky one ordered baguette cheese sandwiches. I ran through the classics, from warm herring and potatoes to choucroute garnie.

Such are the pleasures of brasserie dining, where you can splurge, make do with a sandwich, or revisit an old fave. At a brasserie, there will be white tablecloths, porcelain plates, servers in long aprons lashing through the dining room with overburdened trays held aloft. A good brasserie promises to do it all correctly, and when it delivers, it earns your fealty.

Daniel Rose has long thought Chicago ripe for a big, ballsy brasserie. The 45-year-old Wilmette native has had a storied career trajectory, first making his name as a young, visionary American chef at Spring, a small but influential Paris bistro. From Spring, he sprang onto the American scene in 2016 with Le Coucou, a lavish but just shy of haute Manhattan restaurant financed by East Coast restaurateur Stephen Starr. That sensation won him a James Beard Award for best new restaurant as well as a legion of new fans. I have loved Le Coucou since it opened and would put both its pike quenelles and its leek vinaigrette with hazelnuts on my deathbed menu.

Even before Le Coucou, Rose has wanted to go big in his hometown. "This city's richness comes from its commercial tradition, and a brasserie is the place where commerce and cuisine meet. The Adler Planetarium and Field Museum were built by *commerçants*," he told me, using the French word for "trader" to drive home the thought. Working with Boka Restaurant Group, he has realized this vision with River North's Le Select, the city's biggest restaurant opening since the pandemic. It is a huge place, a gorgeous place, a place that smells like crisp, fresh money. It's a place where the captains wear white stewards' jackets and a *chariot de hors d'oeuvres* rolls through the dining room.

I've been to Le Select three times, and I've loved both its upfront bravura and its thoughtful, tradition-minded underpinnings. Still, this restaurant isn't yet performing as well as it should. With his keen eye for detail, Rose can transport you to Paris and big-shouldered brasserie culture. But repeated gaffes from both the kitchen crew and the service staff burst the bubble, and suddenly you're back at another downtown food factory that's huge, uneven, and expensive. Is that half roast chicken really $46? *Mais, oui.*

Before we go there, let's stop and drink this place in – these acres of patterned terrazzo, cinnabar velour, and antiqued mirroring, a place where belle époque and steampunk aesthetics meet in a kind of art deco streamlined swish. Also, the people-watching is nonpareil. On one visit I sat next to the cast from *The Bear.*

On one visit, we started with a round of kirs (the classic Champagne-cassis, as well as variations made with beer or lemon soda) and called that hors d'oeuvres trolley over. While the cart has since been removed from the menu (for now at least), it was a fun if diddly way to begin, with lots of little plates, along with bread and butter taken from a block so big you want to carve Princess Kay of the Milky Way's likeness in it. We ate a little eggplant puff with our fingers, and dug into a mound of fantastic gravlax-topped céleri rémoulade with a fork. I wasn't sure how to attack a bloopy

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Media Partners CHICAGO MAGAZINE Q101 CHICAGO'S ALTERNATIVE half egg that someone in the kitchen had a hard time peeling. It came napped with fresh mayonnaise and a dollop of mushy caviar imported from a French purveyor. (There are better domestic sources; just sayin'.) I love the idea of an apéro and nibbles before dinner, but this $25-a-head spread made me miss the honest French café food it references.

When the menu moves into hearty snacks and appetizers, it starts to sing. Le Select's croque monsieur is an exemplar of form with its sharp Alpine cheeses, bubbly glaze, and side of green salad. In a similar vein, the Alsatian tarte flambée brings a crackery crust topped with smoked bacon, crème fraîche, and sweetly melted onions. An oil-glossed slice of raw tuna ravigote comes slathered with so much deliciously creamy-pickley, tarragon-tinged sauce that you reach for the bread to mop up every bit and then …

The Edith Piaf record stops with a needle scratch. If you want bread with your meal, you've got to pay $12 for an entire épi from La Fournette (serviceable) and a dish of Norman butter (great). This is a brasserie with paper covering the white linen and no bread plates, because convivial brasserie dining means you expect endless crusty bread and keep it right on the table next to your plate for sopping purposes. Free bread is a human right in France, like retirement at 62. Charging for bread? That's some Marie Antoinette shit.

You'll pay a high price for entrées, which arrive on shiny porcelain plates imprinted with the restaurant's logo. The undisputed star is fat sea scallops quivering in a magical state between raw and cooked and set over a thick, creamy curry. Yet that expensive chicken is more of a bore than its Armagnac, prune, and bacon set would suggest. I've tried the (cough, $58) steak au poivre twice. Ordered medium-rare, it came out a very wiggly rare once and barely pink the other time.

Alas, these issues have a way of piling up. The pommes allumettes are some soggy-ass french fries. A duck breast has a rubbery texture and soft, fatty skin. A dry, underseasoned meat pie called tourte alsacienne comes out barely warmed, like something you'd enjoy from the pastry case at Brioche Dorée but not as a plated appetizer. An intriguing jellied terrine of skate and crab comes with two lobes of uni that are spoiled one time but great the next.

Service has been chaotic enough on weekday nights that I'd hesitate to go on a Saturday. Captains upsell you on side dishes and then forget to bring them. Bussers ignore empty water glasses. The wine list offers some nice choices for those of us who aren't going triple digits, but wine service is odd and poorly timed. The sommelier described our Chiroubles as "spicy and flirtatious," and when we asked him to expound a bit, he repeated, "IT'S SPICY AND FLIRTATIOUS," like we just couldn't hear him the first time.

LE SELECT
★½
504 N. Wells St.,
River North
■ **Dinner for two**
$300
■ **Tip** Head up to Bar 504, the swank upstairs cocktail lounge, for a before- or after-dinner martini.

★ Recommended
★★ Very good ★★★ Excellent
★★★★ Exceptional

Skip the bigger-ticket items to go all in on dessert, which is Le Select's sweetest spot. A syrup-soaked savarin au rhum comes with a cloud of whipped cream and a splash of tableside spirits. The rich, ridiculously good crème caramel is prepared with a recipe developed by Rose's wife, Marie-Aude, also a chef. The profiteroles – crisp choux pastries filled with vanilla ice cream and doused with hot bitter chocolate sauce tableside – bring me back to that brasserie in Paris.

In conversation with Rose, I begin to understand he's trying something different here from what he's done in the past. In Paris and New York, he has used his outsider's perspective to gently update the classics of French *restauration* for a new generation. At Le Select, he's taking his insights into the culture and tropes of this style of dining and bringing it home. I ask him if he's happy with how his kitchen staff of 40 is performing. He wriggles away from the question, praising the quality of cooks in Chicago, but admitting that his initial chef de cuisine didn't work out and has been replaced with Pat Sheerin, late of Trencherman.

I hope this new hire will help Le Select reach its potential, but it has a ways to go to earn my loyalty. Though Rose lives in Paris, he intends to spend the next months here getting it into shape, maybe even earning its stripes as a Chicago classic. This place is important to him as a Chicagoan, he says, and "we intend to be here for a long time." C

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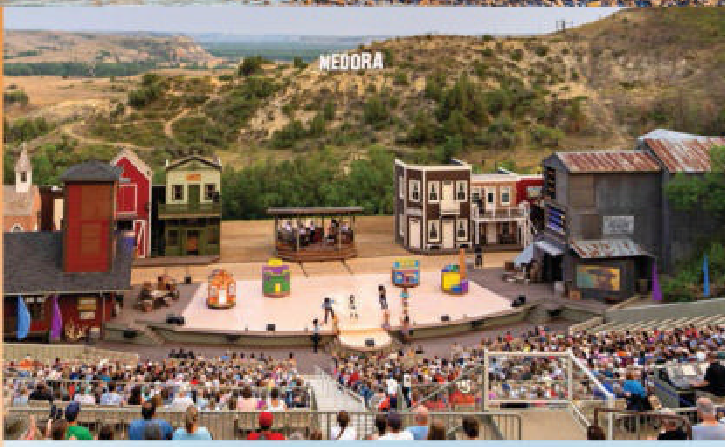

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Floral Cloud at Bar Mar

Drinks in Bloom

This season's beverages are coming up roses—and violets and lavenders and chamomiles. By AMY CAVANAUGH

FLORAL CLOUD AT BAR MAR
This vibrant number mixes Fords gin with lemon, maraschino liqueur, and crème de violette. It's finished tableside with a smoky cloud of hibiscus, rose, and orange blossom poured over the top. *$17. 120 N. Wacker Dr., Loop*

Coffee and Elderflower Fizz at Bar Esmé

POMEGRANATE GAZOZ AT GALIT
This refreshing, nonalcoholic soda is made with a pomegranate, hibiscus, cardamom, and rose syrup. A spritz of rose water over the top lends a bright floral scent. *$9. 2429 N. Lincoln Ave., Lincoln Park*

R SPRITZ AT RPM ITALIAN
This springy sip combines Cocchi Rosa, an apéritif wine, with Mancino Vermouth Sakura, which is made with Japanese cherry blossoms and Italian lavender. Lemon and sparkling rosé finish it off. *$17. 52 W. Illinois St., River North*

LITTLE LIES AT CHEF'S SPECIAL COCKTAIL BAR
Beverage director Chase Bracamontes taps florals for all manner of drinks. For this white Negroni riff, she infuses mezcal with chamomile and chrysanthemum, then combines it with herby Suze and vermouth. *$14. 2165 N. Western Ave., Bucktown*

SCRATCH BREWING'S BARREL-AGED BLACKBERRY-LAVENDER BEER AT HOPLEAF
Beers from the lauded brewery in downstate Ava can be hard to find around Chicago, but Hopleaf is tapping its blackberry-lavender offering. The sour beer is aged for a year in a red wine barrel. *$12. 5148 N. Clark St., Andersonville*

COFFEE AND ELDERFLOWER FIZZ AT BAR ESMÉ
Beverage director Tia Barrett thinks outside the box with her flavor pairings, adding coffee two ways (liqueur and syrup) plus St. Germain elderflower liqueur to tequila. Lemon and egg white lighten things up. *$18. 2200 N. Clark St., Lincoln Park*

PHOTOGRAPHY: (COCKTAILS) JEFF MARINI; (FLOWERS) ISTOCK

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Turon
Sisig

Family Flavors

At Boonie's Filipino Restaurant, Joe Fontelera explores the cuisine he grew up with.

By AMY CAVANAUGH

THE SIZZLING SISIG IS A MUST-ORDER AT BOONIE'S FILIPINO RESTAURANT. Pork hash topped with an egg that the server mixes into the dish, it's equal parts showstopper and comfort food. Chef Joe Fontelera didn't eat it as a kid in Lincoln Square and Skokie in the 1980s and '90s, but when he had it as an adult on his first trip to the Philippines, from which his family began emigrating in 1970, he "felt like a window opened," he recalls.

Fontelera's take on Filipino cuisine draws on both his family and his chef roots (he most recently worked at sushi spot Arami). In 2020, he developed Boonie Foods, first as a pop-up, then at Revival Food Hall, where he served rice plates and tacos. But this BYOB brick-and-mortar spot, which opened in February, is what he always envisioned: "I focus on how you would eat these dishes if your parents or grandmother made them for you."

The menu includes items he ate as a child, like crackly lumpia, sinigang (tomato-tamarind soup with trout), and links of garlicky Vigan longganisa. Also, fruit: The meal ends with a complimentary dish, like green grapes compressed with lychee juice. "Growing up, fruit was a way my family displayed affection," he says. And so it's a gesture he extends to diners, a reminder that you're at Fontelera's place. *4337 N. Western Ave., North Center*

Ask the Dining Editor

What itinerary would you recommend for a farewell food tour of Chicago?
I'd seek out dishes that are distinctly local. Block off a weekend, and start with a hot dog at Wolfy's (2734 W. Peterson Ave., West Ridge), then a jibarito at Jibarito y Mas (3400 W. Fullerton Ave., Logan Square). The next day, it's on to Pat's Pizza and Ristorante (2679 N. Lincoln Ave., Lincoln Park) for a tavern-style sausage pie and Lem's Bar-B-Q (311 E. 75th St., Greater Grand Crossing) for ribs. End down the block with a slice of caramel cake at Brown Sugar Bakery (328 E. 75th St., Greater Grand Crossing). Bon voyage!

Where should I have my graduation party?
For such an occasion, you want a spot with crowd-pleasing food and a fun ambience. Club Lucky (1824 W. Wabansia Ave., Bucktown) fits the bill. The old-school Italian fave can accommodate parties of up to 250. It also offers group packages to make planning easy, including a martini add-on if you want to get *really* celebratory. –A.C.

Email Amy at acavanaugh@chicagomag.com with your burning dining questions.

ILLUSTRATION: GREG CLARKE

Photograph by JEFF MARINI

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IN THE KITCHEN

Toast With the Most

LOOKING FOR A MOTHER'S DAY BRUNCH dish as special as the moms in your life? Bostock's your move. Like a hybrid of French toast and an almond croissant, these baked slices of frangipane-topped brioche are essentially the Ina Garten of breakfast pastries – at once laid-back and classy. Best put your siblings on notice: According to Greg Wade, head baker at Publican Quality Bread, this berry-scattered, syrupy, and "crazy good" version is "favorite-child fuel for sure." –CATE HUGUELET

GREG WADE'S BOSTOCK

Makes 8 slices
Active time 25 minutes
Total time 50 minutes

2	cups sugar, divided
1	cup plus 1 Tbsp. unsalted butter, at room temperature
2	eggs, at room temperature
1	tsp. dark rum
2¼	cups almond flour
⅔	cup bread flour
½	tsp. kosher salt
8	thick slices of brioche
2	cups sliced almonds
1	cup fresh berries, for serving
	Powdered sugar, for serving

1

Heat the oven to 350 degrees. Combine ¾ cup sugar with ¾ cup water in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally to dissolve the sugar. Set syrup aside.

2

In the bowl of a stand mixer, paddle butter and remaining sugar on medium speed until light and fluffy, about 5 minutes. Reduce the speed to low and add eggs one at a time, followed by rum, mixing well between additions. Stop as needed to scrape down the sides of the bowl.

3

In a medium bowl, whisk together flours and salt. Add to the wet mixture, paddling on low until fully combined, 1 to 2 minutes. Set almond cream aside.

4

Arrange brioche slices 1 inch apart on a parchment-lined baking tray. Use a pastry brush to generously soak bread with syrup. Evenly spread each slice with ½ cup of almond cream. Sprinkle sliced almonds on top.

5

Bake until cream is golden brown and almonds are lightly toasted, 20 to 25 minutes. Remove from the oven and top slices with berries and a dusting of powdered sugar. Serve warm.

Photograph by JEFF MARINI

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The Hot List

10 places everyone's talking about (in order of heat)

1 **DON BUCIO'S TAQUERIA** **What** The latest restaurant from chef Rodolfo Cuadros (Amaru, Bloom Plant Based Kitchen), this colorful, casual spot highlights vegan Mexican fare, from guac to coconut arroz con leche. **Why** You're probably here for the tacos and burritos, and Cuadros offers clever plant-based subs, like guajillo-braised jackfruit for barbacoa. **Where** *2763 N. Milwaukee Ave., Logan Square*

Jackfruit birria burrito

2 **GG'S CHICKEN SHOP** **What** Lee Wolen (Boka, Alla Vita) lands a permanent space for his chicken concept. **Why** Winner, winner, rotisserie chicken dinner – a bird plus sides like smashed potatoes and mac and cheese is an easy family meal. **Where** *3325 N. Southport Ave., Lake View*

3 **ITOKO** **What** Also joining the new Boka complex (see No. 2) is this Japanese spot from Gene Kato (Momotaro). **Why** The menu features maki, hand rolls, and – Kato's specialty – a variety of robata, like shiitake mushrooms dressed with shiso and lemon. **Where** *3325 N. Southport Ave., Lake View*

4 **SUSHI BY SCRATCH RESTAURANTS** **What** The omakase boom keeps coming, and two Michelin-starred L.A. chefs are behind the latest. **Why** They've brought along signature bites like hamachi nigiri decked out with corn pudding and breadcrumbs. **Where** *415 N. Milwaukee Ave., West Town*

5 **DUSEK'S TAVERN & DINING ROOM** **What** A big get: Big Kids' Ryan Pfeiffer joins the Pilsen staple as culinary director. **Why** On the tavern side, opt for a Pfeiffer classic smash burger. The more upscale dining room serves a four-course menu with plates like caramelized mussels. **Where** *1227 W. 18th St., Pilsen*

6 **HEAVY FEATHER AND SLIPPERY SLOPE** **What** After a long pandemic hiatus, the twofer from the Scofflaw group is back in action. **Why** Sip a Cadillac margarita in the retro barroom upstairs, then have a second marg while you let loose on the dance floor at the Slope. **Where** *2357 N. Milwaukee Ave., Logan Square*

7 **CREPAS CULICHI** **What** This faux-fancy crêpe-focused restaurant moves from Berwyn and upgrades its menu. **Why** Love crêpes? From chicken tinga to pistachio-banana, you can have one for each course. **Where** *1101 Lake St., Oak Park*

8 **POUR SOULS** **What** Cocktail mixers sold by the ounce from bartender Tim Williams **Why** Whether you need enough five-spice old-fashioned mix to make one or 20 drinks, Williams has you. **Where** *1740 W. Division St., Wicker Park*

9 **THE ALBION MANOR** **What** New chef James Menendez (Moody Tongue) freshens up the British pub. **Why** Snack on short rib sammies and beet tartare; a tasting menu arrives soon. **Where** *1480 W. Webster Ave., Lincoln Park*

10 **TZUCO** **What** Carlos Gaytán embarks on a journey through Mexico's regions with monthly à la carte specials. **Why** Get schooled in the country's diverse flavors; May focuses on dishes from Jalisco, while in June, it's off to the central region of Bajío. **Where** *720 N. State St., River North*

PHOTOGRAPH: EMMA MCGREGOR

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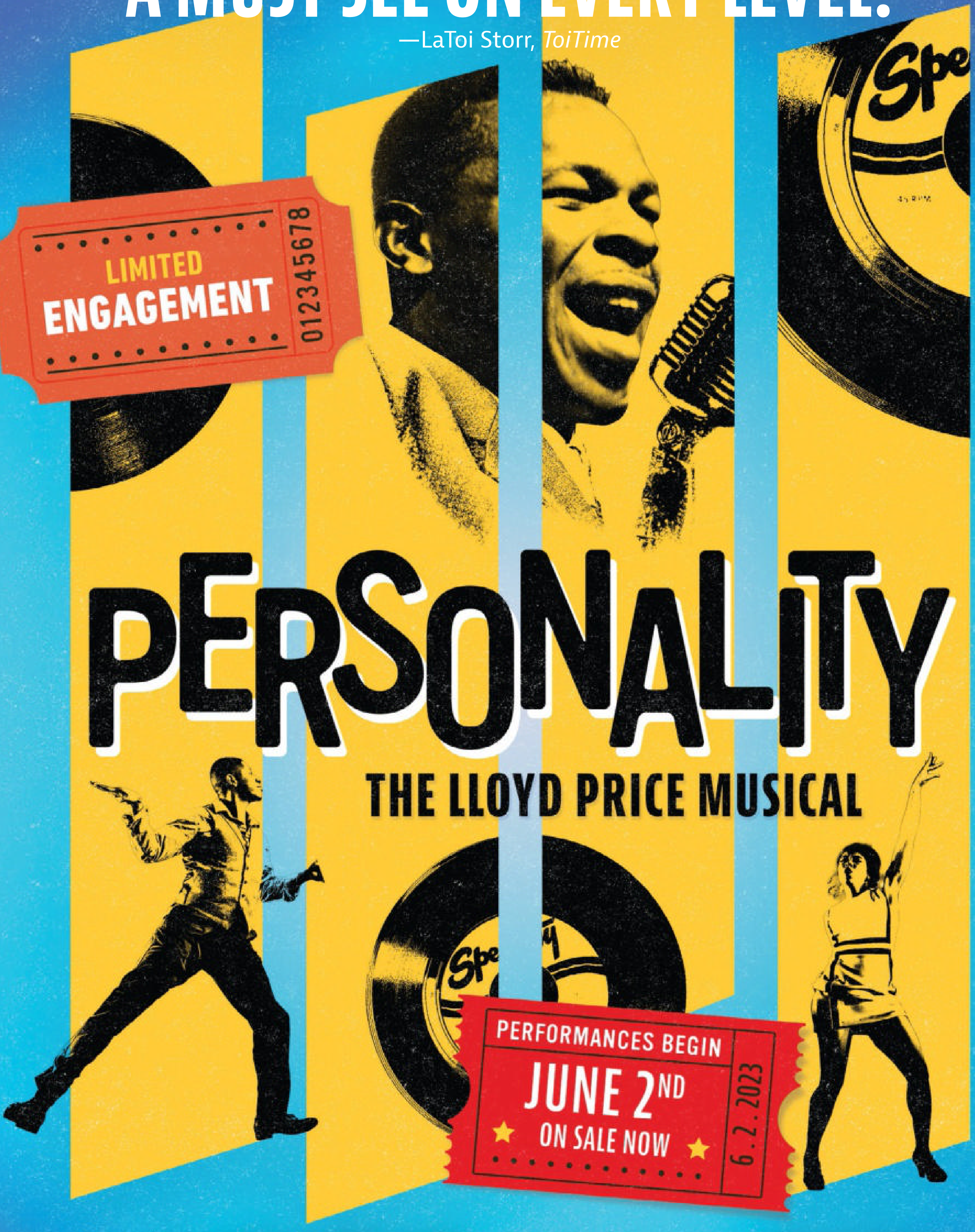
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Lithuania Calling

How a local indie band became a one-hit wonder on the shores of the Baltic Sea.

By DAVID McMILLIN

IF YOU LOOKED AT MY BANK ACCOUNT IN 2012, YOU WOULD HAVE questioned my life choices. Six years after graduating from college, I was still pursuing a career in music. I was earning $38 a month from streaming royalties – certainly not enough to cover the rent for my Roscoe Village apartment.

I had started as a solo singer-songwriter before launching an indie folk-rock trio, Fort Frances, in 2010. We rode the highs – sold-out nights at Schubas felt like we were on the brink of hitting the big time – before bottoming out at the lows of indie rock obscurity: playing at 10 p.m. on a Tuesday in Columbia, Missouri, for four people. Touring was a game of working to break even, lugging massive gear down basement steps, cramming into a Quality Inn motel room, eating granola bars, getting sick, not going to the doctor because of poor health insurance, coming home – and convincing myself that I should do it all over again.

Hoping to earn some time in the spotlight instead of feeling like the dim background soundtrack at a bar, we released a series of cover songs. It was an effort to stay relevant and get some attention – most of us just want to hear something we already know – while we worked on new material.

Initially, we stayed in comfortable territory: Beck, Simon & Garfunkel, and the Grateful Dead. But after a few releases, I started to think we should do something more unexpected. Why not hip-hop? Other than the fact that we had zero swagger, it seemed like a great idea. At my piano, my hands stumbled upon a song that felt like it had potential: the 1991 DJ Jazzy Jeff & the Fresh Prince classic "Summertime." Could I sing the line "It's like the summer's a natural aphrodisiac" without laughing? It was time to find out.

I recorded a solo version with a somber four-chord progression underneath the lyrics about double dutch, chasing girls, and driving cars on oversize rims. I emailed it to my bandmate Jeff Piper, who churned out a bassline and drum samples that turned it into a more mellow summer-party vibe than the original track. We released it on SoundCloud.

The track was ripe for a tongue-in-cheek video – one where we could embrace our lack of hip-hop cred. We filmed ourselves playing basketball (with the same penchant for air balls that got me cut from the B-team in sixth grade), burning hot dogs on a back porch grill, and splashing around Lake Michigan with an inflatable dolphin. After taking music making so seriously for so long with limited results, it felt like the right time to treat everything like a joke.

The release initially did what most everything does on the internet: It got some clicks, then it got lost. Soon, though, we noticed an uptick in new fans on Facebook and sign-ups on our email list, all with unfamiliar names – Agné, Sarunas, Donis. YouTube comments on the video rolled in: "Love you from Lithuania." "Come to Lithuania!" "I'm playing it nonstop on my car radio – good luck from another Lithuanian fan."

Were we being punked? Was the Kremlin financing some crazy bot campaign to target lower-class American bands? Over the next couple of years, the YouTube view count continued to climb: 30,000 … 65,000 … 125,000. Then in April 2015, an email arrived with the subject line "Lithuania calling."

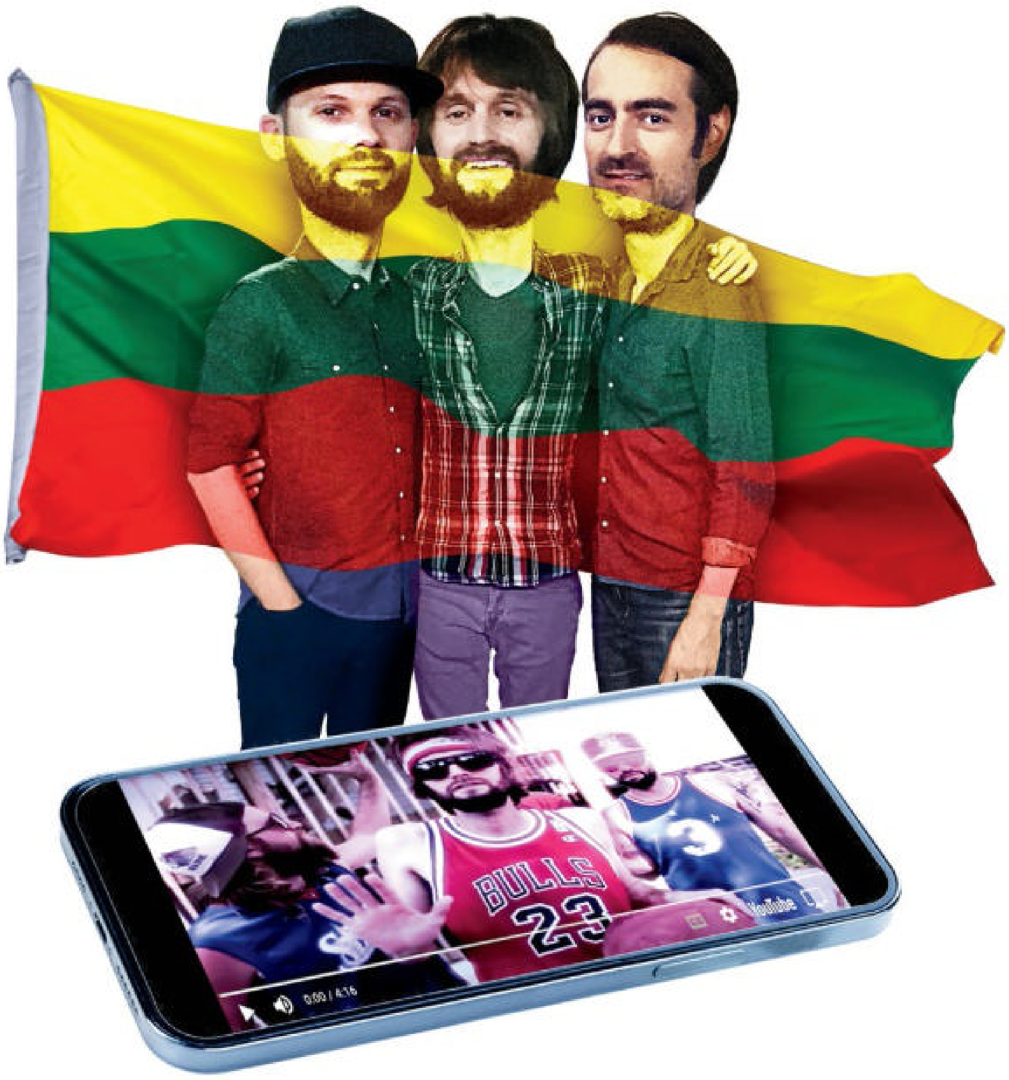

Illustration by JOE DARROW

"Since your cover of 'Summertime' was really popular last summer, we think it would [be] a great idea to bring you guys over for a gig," Victor Diawara, the owner of a venue in Vilnius called Loftas, wrote. "I might even be able to set up 1-3 performances. Is there any time you plan to be in Europe this summer?"

The answer, of course, was no. We had no manager, no label, no publicist – and certainly no European booking agent. Our touring plans for the summer included renting a U-Haul trailer to play shows in Wisconsin and Colorado. But I wasn't about to let this chance slip away.

"Anytime Lithuania calls, we answer," I wrote back. "Right now, we don't have any plans to be in Europe, but I'm hoping that we can get something in the works."

Victor and I volleyed emails back and forth until he suddenly disappeared. Lithuania, it seemed, had called, gotten me excited, and promptly hung up. Then, in late July, Victor was back in my life with an unlikely companion: the U.S. Embassy. As part of a cultural exchange agreement, the embassy had agreed to help cover our travel expenses. The trip was on. We were set for top billing at Loftas Fest, alongside Le1f, a rapper from New York who had signed to XL, and Young Fathers, a Mercury Prize (the U.K.'s Grammy equivalent) winner.

There was one big problem: Aaron Kiser, who had been behind the drum kit since we started the band, couldn't go. His life was complicated at the time, with a young daughter at home. I needed to find a replacement. Fortunately, my old friend Chris Farr, one of the best drummers I've ever met, had recently moved from New York to Berlin. I called him with an invitation: Did he want to come to Lithuania? He was in.

> **I was 50-50 on whether the entire thing was some sort of band catfishing scam that would involve demand for payment to return to the United States.**

On our journey to Vilnius, Jeff and I still felt the unease of internet success. The language barrier in some of our email communications had created a long delay in actually booking flights. They weren't confirmed until 10 days before we were to leave, and even then, my ticket had been booked under the name "Davin," which seemed like a potential hurdle for the TSA. I was 50-50 on whether the entire thing was some sort of band catfishing scam that would involve demand for payment to return to the United States.

After an eight-hour flight to Frankfurt, a five-hour layover, and a two-hour Lufthansa connection, we arrived in Vilnius – and discovered that our status was indeed real. Our faces were plastered on fliers and billboards promoting the festival. Victor's team had secured us a full slate of PR appearances, including a TV performance on *Labas Rytas, Lietuva* (that's "Good Morning, Lithuania"; the host asked about our "chill vibes"), an interview on the country's public radio station, and a drop-in at ZIP FM, a popular Lithuanian radio station that had put "Summertime" in its rotation early on. Back home, the best we had managed was a couple of spins on WXRT's *Local Anesthetic* – a small success but a nod to our favorite station's belief that we weren't bound for much beyond the shore of Lake Michigan. We had made it to the Baltic Sea, and we had a translator. Take that, 93.1 FM.

Still, there was one concern I couldn't shake: What would our Lithuanian fans think about the rest of our material? Crafting a set list for any one-hit wonder is not easy. How does the band Chumbawamba plan 60 minutes of music when the whole crowd just wants to sing the chorus of "Tubthumping"? But we faced an even taller order: "Summertime" was a hip-hop lightning bolt in the midst of a cloud cover of midtempo Americana and alternative rock.

I asked our translator to teach me some key phrases in Lithuanian – *ačiū* is "thank you"; *labas vakaras* means "good evening" – to help endear us to the sold-out crowd of around 3,000. I told Jeff and Chris that we needed to bring the groove of a hip-hop act even though we weren't one. After our set started, sometime after 1 a.m., I realized the Lithuanian audience didn't just love chill vibes – *they* were chill. I'm sure plenty wondered when we would stop playing Fort Frances originals, but they seemed respectful and happy to wait (save for one guy who threw a beer can onstage, but I'm going to continue to tell myself it was due to excitement).

Finally, I put down my guitar and strolled to the keyboard to play that familiar G minor chord. The crowd roared. There is no better feeling than watching an audience smile as they sing every word louder than you. We had spent the better part of a decade chasing a big break, but we didn't need three chords and the truth, as Harlan Howard once put it. It turns out what we needed was four chords, someone else's truth, and love from a country approximately 4,600 miles away.

In the years since, my music career has continued to bounce like a teeter-totter between rising success and crushing failure. I have written songs that have been featured in hit TV shows, and I have cried backstage after playing to nearly empty rooms. I have shared the stage with Grammy-winning songwriters, and I have woken up at 4 a.m. with a crippling level of anxiety about the need to find a day job. In that time, nothing has been as magical as our closing song in Vilnius. But each summer, I see a glimmer of hope from somewhere new in Europe. "Summertime" will hit the top 50 Shazams in Athens, and I'll imagine a crowd of people at a bar with someone holding up their phone. The algorithm scours a database before spitting out that this track, this reminder that it's time to sit back and unwind, was recorded by a band in Chicago that you have never heard of – until now.

PHOTOGRAPHY: (GROUP, VIDEO IMAGE) DAVID McMILLIN; (FLAG) GETTY IMAGES

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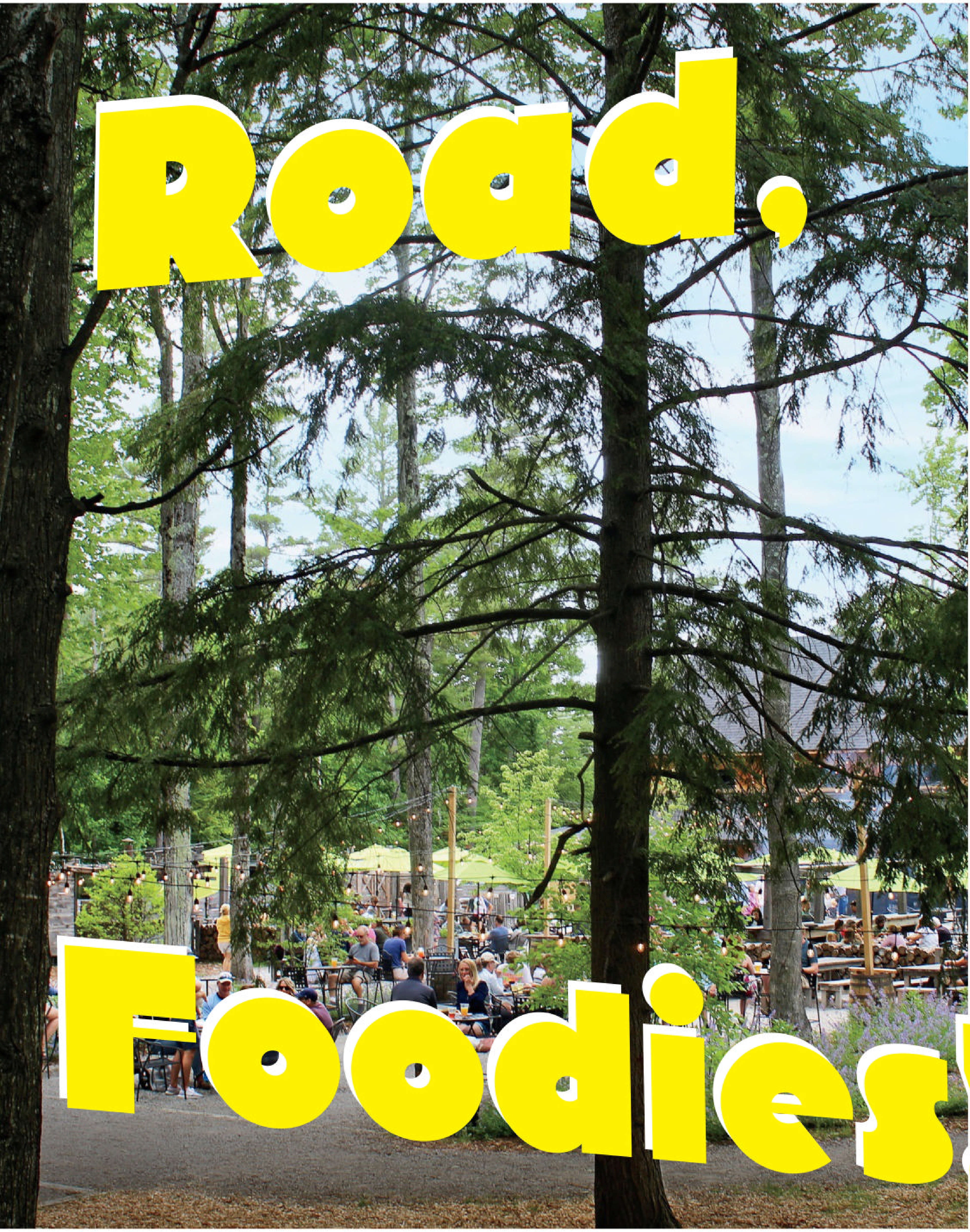
PHOTO LOCATION: PAW PAW RIVER
BENTON HARBOR

Berkshire pork belly at Vida in Indianapolis. Right: The beer garden at Hop Lot Brewing Co. in Suttons Bay, Michigan

Hit the

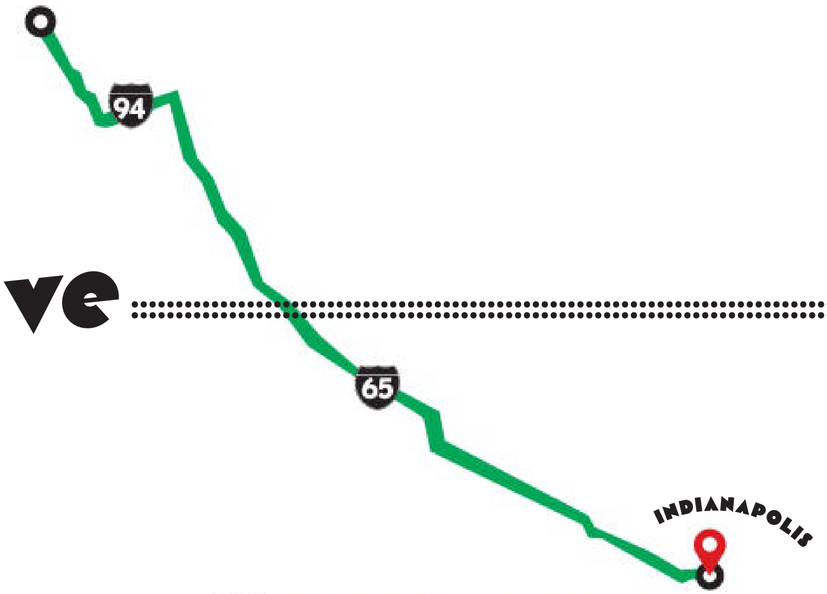
Pack your appetite and explore these thriving dining scenes, from Indy to Traverse City, Michigan—all just an easy drive away.

Road, Foodies!



1

Indy's New Culinary Wave



Forward-thinking chefs and bartenders are serving some of the country's best eats and drinks. **Amy Cavanaugh** digs in.

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When I sat down at **Strange Bird** (128 S. Audubon Rd.), a tropical bar in Indianapolis's Irvington neighborhood, I ordered a daiquiri. The bartender, Ian, chilled the glass with liquid nitrogen, rolling the vapor around in one hand as he shook the cocktail with the other, then set it in front of me. I took a sip. Perfect.

The last time I visited Strange Bird, from brothers Neal and Paul Warner, was February 2020, when my boyfriend, Kenney, and I were in Indianapolis on the last weekend trip we'd be able to take for quite some time. I had vowed to return soon to the then-four-month-old spot. ("Soon" wound up being three years later.) Kenney, who lived in Irvington in 2005, was wowed too: "Back then, a bar of that caliber meant a trip to New York or Chicago, not a walk down the street." I've been to Indy many times and sampled the restaurants run by James Beard–nominated chefs Martha Hoover, Neal Brown, Jonathan Brooks, and Abbi Merriss – the people who jump-started the city's dining scene. For this trip, I wanted to try newer spots with an exciting energy. Places like Strange Bird.

The Warner brothers run more than just that. Among their five concepts: **Landlocked Baking Company** (118 S. Audubon Rd.) next door, a daytime café for biscuit sandwiches, miso grits, and guava and cream cheese pastries. And

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1 Laminated pastries at Landlocked Baking Company **2** The Dressed Down at Strange Bird, with mezcal, pineapple, orange, and bitters **3** Strange Bird **4** Vida chef Thomas Melvin plucking greens off the restaurant's hydroponic wall

PHOTOGRAPHY: *PREVIOUS PAGES* (FOOD) JEFF MARINI; (DINING AREA) DREW LUTKE. *THESE PAGES* JEFF MARINI

5 Arkansas cheese dip and catfish sandwich at Natural State Provisions
6 Head barista Zac Foster at Parlor Public House

we had pistachio and spiced demerara lattes made with beans roasted at **Coat Check Coffee** (401 E. Michigan St.), the Warners' first spot. They aren't the only big players in the city's thriving java scene. Hugo Cano's **Amberson Coffee & Grocer** (401 S. College Ave.), located in an old gas station, is a buzzy spot for its pour-overs and vanilla-date lattes. And at the 18-month-old **Parlor Public House** (600 E. Ohio St.), head barista Zac Foster uses local beans in drinks enhanced with smoke and black sesame drizzle; come evening, head bartender Brian Oliver makes cognac espresso martinis with the house nitro cold brew.

Properly buzzed, we headed to dinner on a suggestion from Julia Spalding, the *Indianapolis Monthly* dining editor. "Do you know about **Vida**?" she asked me. "They do a prix fixe meal that is spectacular." She was right. At this understated spot (601 E. New York St.), which opened in 2016, chef Thomas Melvin's four-course lineup includes a roasted carrot with black bean purée and curry vinaigrette and a salad of "wall greens" that, yes, come off a wall in the kitchen, where Melvin grows leafy greens, herbs, and flowers hydroponically. "The cuisine of Vida is always an evolution," he told me.

The next morning, we stopped at **Sidedoor Bagel** (1103 E. 10th St.). At the tiny corner shop, which opened in late 2021, baker Josh Greeson crafts sourdough bagels worthy of the line stretching down the sidewalk. A sesame one slathered with lox-dill cream cheese was a good start. For lunch, I was excited to try **Natural State Provisions** (414 Dorman St.), a restaurant and bar that Adam and Alicia Sweet opened last September, inspired by Adam's Arkansas roots. I loved the super-crispy catfish sandwich and Arkansas cheese dip, loaded with cumin, cayenne, and paprika. Pair it with a pint of Charmer cream ale that Pax Verum brews exclusively for them. With a patio and dog park outside, this is an easy place to while away the afternoon.

It was a gorgeous early-spring day, so we drove to **Lick** (1049 E. 54th St.). There, sisters Meredith Kong and Kelly Ryan serve organic ice cream in flavors like raspberry cheesecake. We took ours for a stroll on the nearby Monon Trail, which helped us walk off the day's meals and gear up for dinner at **9th Street Bistro**, a cozy spot from Samir and Rachel Mohammad in Noblesville (56 S. Ninth St.), a 30-minute drive north. Samir, who was nominated this year for a James Beard Award for best chef in the Great Lakes region, cooks his past and present with dishes that nod to his New Mexico roots, like lobster enchiladas, and reflect Indiana flavors, like a pork tenderloin stuffed with sage, Asiago, and country ham.

On the way out of Indy the next day, we swung by the brightly colored **Che Chori** (3124 W. 16th St.), where in 2021 Marcos Cesar Perera-Blasco, a sausage maker who was born in Argentina, began making sandwiches like a choripan, a chorizo link with chimichurri, or chopped porchetta accented with chimichurri and pickled red onions. We ordered both, along with empanadas stuffed with the likes of butternut squash and cheesy pineapple bacon, and grabbed seats at a picnic table.

Just down the road was where we had started our trip: **California Burger** (3502 W. 16th St.), which members of the Hugais family opened in 2021. Back then, Indy residents waited for hours in the drive-through for these California-style burgers. I'm still thinking about how great my turkey burger loaded with avocado and veggies was. "This place would kill it in Chicago," I told Kenney. And it's one of the reasons I'll be back – but this time, I won't let three years go by. ■

PHOTOGRAPHY: (FOOD) AMY CAVANAUGH; (COFFEE) PARLOR PUBLIC HOUSE

Burger Pit Stops

Are we there yet? Nope, but break up your drive by grabbing a beef-and-bun bite at these iconic spots along the way. **By Titus Ruscitti**

TRIPLE XXX
Famous CHOP STEAK
Coca-Cola

On your way to: Detroit
Stop: Schlenker's Sandwich Shop, Jackson, Michigan
Grab a seat at the U-shaped counter and order your burger with "everything sauce," a delicious combination of diced onion, mustard, relish, and spices. Or try an olive burger, a tangy western Michigan specialty that features mayo mixed with chopped green olives. *1104 E. Ganson St.*

On your way to: Milwaukee
Stop: Kewpee Sandwich Shop, Racine, Wisconsin
After peaking at more than 400 locations just before World War II, the country's second-oldest hamburger chain is down to just five. The burgers at this one have been made virtually the same way since 1926. Get the double for perfect meat-to-bun ratio. *520 Wisconsin Ave.*

On your way to: Minneapolis
Stop: The Oakcrest Tavern, Madison, Wisconsin
Madison is a hotbed of good burgers, but it's tough to top those from this classic tavern. Six-ounce patties of locally butchered beef are grilled behind the bar and come with lettuce, tomato, and a slice of raw onion (you can ask for grilled). *5371 Old Middleton Rd.*

On your way to: Indianapolis
Stop: Triple XXX Family Restaurant, West Lafayette, Indiana
Named for its root beer brand, this drive-in is known for the Duane Purvis All-American burger. It's made with a quarter-pound chopped steak patty served on a toasted sesame seed bun with cheese, lettuce, tomato, pickle, raw onion … and peanut butter (trust us, it works). *2 N. Salisbury St.*

On your way to: St. Louis
Stop: Sunrise Cafe, Springfield
The smash burger trend can be traced to central Illinois, so stop at this daytime diner for one of the region's best. Locals call it Hamburger Dan's for its longtime owner, who smashes grilled onions into patties that sport extra-crisp edges. *1201 S. Second St.*

On your way to: Columbus, Ohio
Stop: Powers Hamburgers, Fort Wayne, Indiana
With its white enameled building, it's impossible not to compare one of the nation's last independent slider shops to White Castle. But it's not even close when it comes to the burgers—these are made with fresh balls of beef smashed into shaved onions on a hot flattop. *1402 S. Harrison St.*

PHOTOGRAPHY: (BURGER) TERRI LEWIS; (RESTAURANT) TRIPLE XXX FAMILY RESTAURANT; (CHEF ILLUSTRATIONS) MONICA HELLSTRÖM

WORTH THE DRIVE

Chicago chefs name Midwest restaurants they will road-trip for.

By Amy Cavanaugh

PAUL VIRANT OF GAIJIN

Pick: The Smokehouse Market and Annie Gunn's, Chesterfield, Missouri
Drive: 5.5 hours
Why it's worth it: "In the 1980s, Smokehouse Market, a specialty grocery that's been around since 1937, acquired this space next door and opened a restaurant. They have great oysters and, if you want something more casual, a burger and bratwurst. You can also get a nice piece of fish."

HIT THE ROAD! DRIVE TIME: 5.5 HOURS DISTANCE: 335 MILES

2

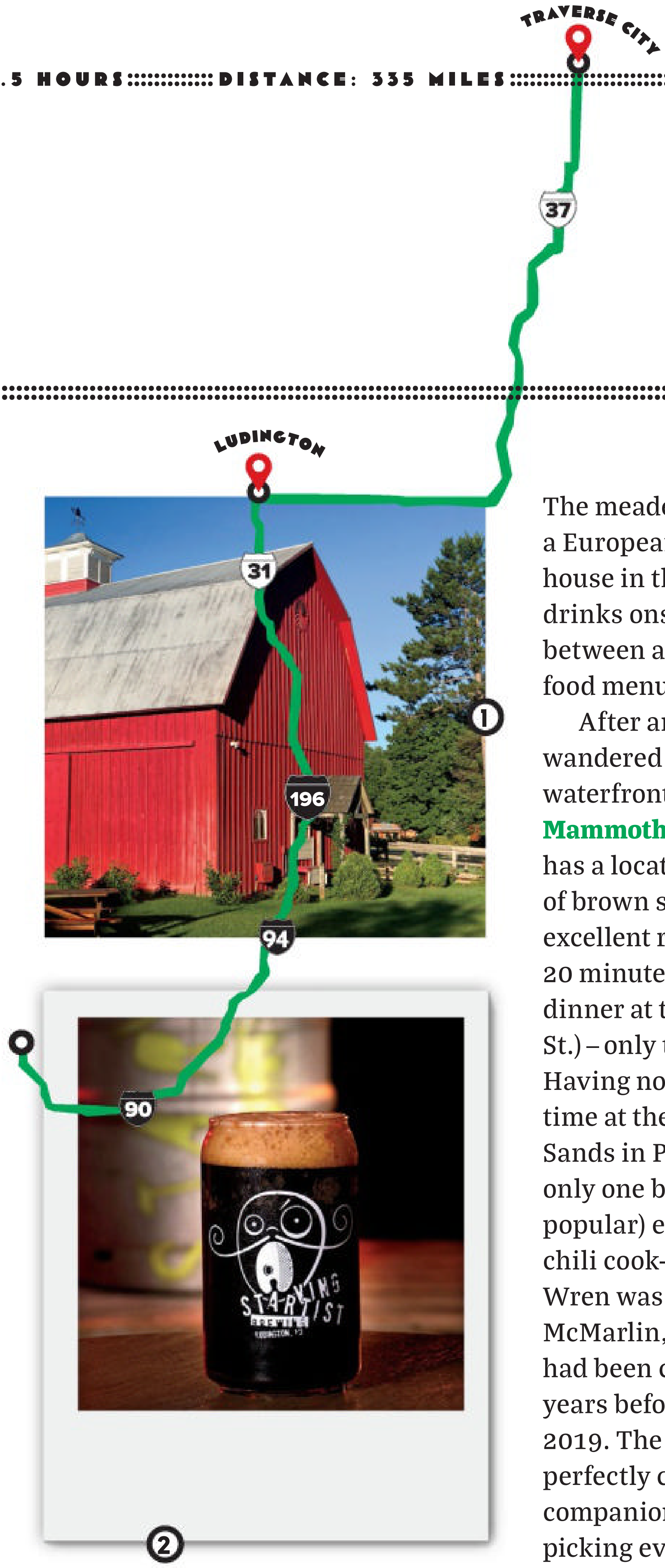
Michigan's Greatest Beer Run

Anthony Todd finds something other than wine to imbibe in Traverse City—and on the way.

With my beer nerd boyfriend to guide me, we headed north to Traverse City, a Michigan tourist town best known for its wineries and fancy bed and breakfasts. But it's not just a place to sip vino anymore. The brewery scene has exploded in recent years, along with distilleries and small-batch food producers, making it an artisanal sustenance paradise.

Our first stop was an hour-out-of-the-way detour in Ludington, two hours southwest of Traverse City (just keep hugging the coast instead of turning northeast at Grand Rapids). **Starving Artist Brewing** (634 S. Stiles Rd.) is perhaps the most country of all country breweries, hiding in the back of a residential lot in a barn behind a house. It features a small porch, an outdoor seating area, and an inclusive vibe (tagline: "Judge beer, not people"). There's an outside window for ordering, with a giant chalkboard indicating what's available. On this day, the brewer was pouring samples, and we tasted most of the lineup. We left with a four-pack of Pop Art, a grapefruit session ale that tastes like summer.

As we drove on, we experienced one of the great joys of a lazy road trip: stopping at any spot that catches your eye. I'd tried mead from **St. Ambrose Cellars** (841 S. Pioneer Rd., Beulah), but never visited the site where it is made. The meadery feels like a cross between a European monastery and a cozy house in the woods. There's a variety of drinks onsite, including cysers, a cross between a cider and a mead, plus a full food menu and brewery.



After arriving in Traverse City, we wandered the warehouse district by the waterfront. Adrian, Michigan–based **Mammoth Distilling** (221 Garland St.) has a location here, and if you're a lover of brown spirits, sample a flight of its excellent rye whiskeys. We headed 20 minutes north to Suttons Bay for dinner at tiny **Wren** (303 N. St. Joseph St.) – only to find a two-hour wait. Having nothing better to do, we killed time at the local casino – Leelanau Sands in Peshawbestown – which had only one blackjack table but a (very popular) euchre tournament and a chili cook-off! Ah, northern Michigan. Wren was worth the wait. Chef Adam McMarlin, originally from Detroit, had been cooking in Traverse City for years before opening his own spot in 2019. The menu changes daily. I had a perfectly cooked Denver steak, and my companion's squab had him gleefully picking every scrap of meat off the bird's tiny legs.

The next day, after we'd wandered downtown Traverse City and popped into shops like **Rocket Fizz** (111-B E. Front St.), a retro candy store with hundreds of indie sodas, it was time to get back to the beer. **Hop Lot** (658 SW Bay Shore Dr., Suttons Bay) doesn't look like much from the road, but once you're there, it's just about perfect – firepits, giant trees, twinkling lights, and laughter everywhere from people having a great Saturday afternoon. We liked the beer enough to grab a growler of 10¢ Circus Show, a dry red ale, to take

PHOTOGRAPHY: (BARN) ST. AMBROSE CELLARS; (BEER) STARVING ARTIST BREWERY; (DISTILLERY) SANDRA WONG GIROUX

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1 **St. Ambrose Cellars**
2 **Starving Artist Brewing** **3** **Mammoth Distilling** **4** **The beer garden at Hop Lot**
5 **Vegetable plate at Farm Club**
6 **Beer at Hop Lot**

home. If you go in good weather, plan to spend the whole afternoon there. We, however, had more places to visit.

The Filling Station Microbrewery (642 Railroad Pl.) is in an old train station on the southern side of Traverse City. It had not only the best pizza I'd had in months (wood-fired, with a snappy cracker crust and roasted veggies) but a great lineup of beers, including the nonalcoholic Hop Water. Befitting the location, the tasting flights are shaped like trains. Adorable.

Our final meal was at **Farm Club** (10051 Lake Leelanau Dr.), an isolated restaurant and brewery on the edge of Traverse City that alone was worth the visit. This place takes farm-to-table seriously: The chefs cook with ingredients from their own fields. The don't-miss starter is a platter of such veggies. When we went in March, that meant thick slices of watermelon radish, turnips, carrots, and beets, along with housemade soppressata and spicy tomato aïoli. I couldn't stop eating the radicchio salad with pickled carrots and potatoes, and the chicken cassoulet with garlicky toast was good enough to make you wish for a permanent winter. As a brewery, Farm Club focuses on lighter styles of beer made with yeast gathered on the property. We were fans of the richer East Coast pale ale.

The list of places to visit could go on – I see you, **Right Brain Brewery** (225 E. 16th St.) – but that's part of the beauty of the area. Everywhere you turn, there's something delicious made right there.

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PHOTOGRAPHY: (DINING AREA) DREW LUTKE; (FOOD, BEER) ANTHONY TODD

HIT THE ROAD! DRIVE TIME: 5 HOURS DISTANCE: 297 MILES

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65
74
CINCINNATI

3

Beyond Cincinnati Chili

John Kessler heads to the Queen City, where pioneering chefs are helping remake neighborhoods.

Fred, my college roommate, is taking me around College Hill, the bedrock community a few miles north of downtown Cincinnati where he grew up. We drive up Hamilton Avenue, which is showing all the signs of urban re-foodification with a microbrewery, a Latin street food spot, and our destination, **Kiki** (5932 Hamilton Ave.), a Japanese izakaya. Fred points out what used to be: Here was Dimitrio's, a sandwich shop that served quintessential Cincy double-deckers; there, the local branch of the famed Ohio ice cream maker Graeter's; and over here, Brothers Drugs, which had a cathode-ray tube tester up front and a lunch counter in the back.

Fred is amazed by the existence of Kiki on the site of the old College Hill Building & Loan Association, whose logo was on his T-ball uniform. I'm amazed, too, because it's as good as any casual Japanese restaurant I've been to anywhere in the country. Owners Hideki and Yuko Harada (he's second-gen Japanese American and she's Japanese) met at culinary school in Osaka and cook with a Japanese technical mastery and a laid-back American sensibility. Their precision-cut toro hand roll set, miraculous heap of greaseless fried kakiage veggies in curry salt, and balanced ryokucha green tea martini all thrill me.

Cincinnati is surprising that way. Over three days, we manage to pop into a number of distinctive, confident, and

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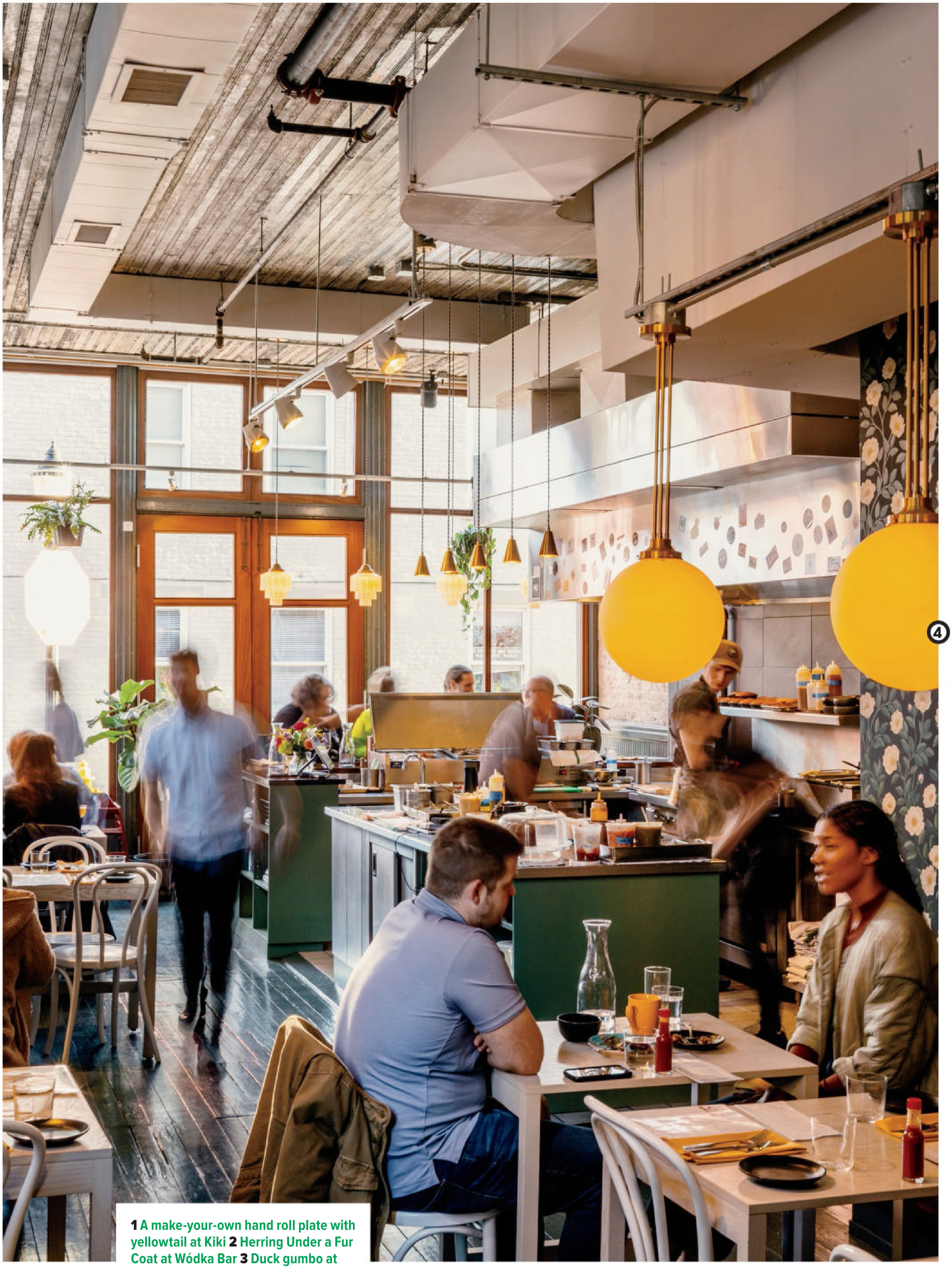

PHOTOGRAPHY: JEFF MARINI

1 A make-your-own hand roll plate with yellowtail at Kiki **2** Herring Under a Fur Coat at Wódka Bar **3** Duck gumbo at Nolia Kitchen **4** Nolia Kitchen

5 Nolia Kitchen chef Jeff Harris **6** Kakiage with curry salt at Kiki **7** Baked Alaska at Mid-City Restaurant

easygoing restaurants that are giving this insular, seven-hilled town on the bank of the Ohio River its new rep as a food destination. Much of the activity centers on Over-the-Rhine, a neighborhood settled by German laborers that used to be separated from downtown by the Miami and Erie Canal (a.k.a. the Rhine). The canal got filled in, and the Germans moved on, leaving behind a wealth of 19th-century buildings. In the late 1950s, the interstate tore through neighboring West End, displacing more than 25,000 middle-class Black people, who decamped for Over-the-Rhine and were greeted by some of the most egregious redlining in the country. “It was a place you drove through without stopping,” recalls Fred.

Now, after 20 years of concentrated urban redevelopment, it is Chicago’s West Loop and New Orleans’s French Quarter rolled into one – a nonstop-fun zone where street art meets Italianate architecture. During the day, you should explore the food shops of Findlay Market, where you can get a breakfast sandwich at **Eckerlin Meats** (116 W. Elder St.) made with goetta, Cincy’s answer to scrapple. But it is the evening scene that will make you feel like you’ve entered that part of the multiverse where the locus of cool is on the north bank of the Ohio River.

Start at the glorious rum bar **Longfellow** (1233 Clay St.) with a Shiso Painkiller and plan your night. You might dine at the bar’s sister establishment, **Mid-City Restaurant** (40 E. Court St.), decorated like a Midwestern knotty-pine rec room and serving a perfectly weird small-plates menu: smelts, a deep-fried yam sandwich with black garlic, and a fun-size maraschino-topped baked Alaska that looks like a vision from your unconscious mind. You could revel in the tapas at **Abigail Street** (1214 Vine St.), which include deep-fried Broccolini, a miracle of texture, and succulent bay scallops in a rich potato purée. Or you could drop into bar seats at **Salazar** (1401 Republic St.) for fried oyster sliders and white Burgundy.

Chef Jose Salazar began luring Cincinnatians back to the city center when he launched that spot a decade ago. “I was part of the opening team at Salazar,” says chef Jeff Harris, “and people would call because they were nervous about getting robbed. The transformation to what it is now has been amazing.” Last year, Harris, a New Orleans native, opened **Nolia Kitchen** (1405 Clay St.), a James Beard finalist for Best New Restaurant, around the corner with a desire to “change the perception of what Black restaurants look like.” This particular one looks like a gorgeous bistro, warmed by that incandescent Edward Hopper light that suffuses Over-the-Rhine. Try Harris’s braised goat with gnocchi, heirloom grits, and duck gumbo, and you’ll see why he’s getting so much attention.

However you plan your OTR crawl, it should end at the moody **Wódka Bar** (1200 Main St.) for a flight of infused vodkas (sea buckthorn! pepperoncini!) or a crimson Borschtini that contains olive brine and pickle juice. The Slavic food is a bit uneven, but you can’t go wrong with Samosarogi, dumplings in tikka masala sauce.

Get a good local guide like Fred to show you what lies beyond OTR, up and over those hills into other neighborhoods casting off their difficult pasts and rebuilding a city for all. Restaurants, as they do, lead the way. ■

PHOTOGRAPHY: (HARRIS) JEFF MARINI; (FOOD) JOHN KESSLER

A Field Guide to St. Louis Sandwiches

From a clever take on a breakfast classic to a Balkan-inspired delight, these are the five not to skip in the Lou.

By Adam Rothbarth

Döner at Balkan Treat Box
Served on wood-fired somun bread, this luxurious chicken- or tofu-filled number comes accented with onion, cheese, cabbage, and lettuce for a creamy, ultra-savory masterpiece of a sandwich. *8103 Big Bend Blvd., Webster Groves*

The Combo at Songbird
Songbird's signature sammie was a cult favorite at the Tower Grove Farmers' Market for years; now the breakfast joint's brick-and-mortar location slings them daily. It's a decadent combination of fried egg, aged white cheddar, and smoked bacon on toasted sourdough, with a dose of honey and sea salt. *4476 Chouteau Ave.*

The Smoked Beet at Union Loafers
Is it surprising that St. Louis's best bakery makes incredible sandwiches? This one is a dazzling veg option; with its punchy sauerkraut, creamy Thousand Island dressing, and hearty egg, it could go toe to toe with any Reuben. *1629 Tower Grove Ave.*

The St. Paul at Mai Lee
Though its origins are tough to pin down, this fusion dish was likely created in the 1940s by a Chinese restaurant owner who had moved to St. Louis from Minnesota (hence the name). Featuring an egg foo young patty with lettuce and mayo on white bread, it's a hearty option for around $6. Though many Chinese spots in town offer it, Mai Lee makes the best. *8396 Musick Memorial Dr., Brentwood*

Hot Salami at Gioia's Deli
Located in the Hill neighborhood (the city's version of a Little Italy), the deli has been a local favorite for over 100 years. And its storied sandwich comes on your choice of white or garlic-cheese bread, layered with spicy mustard, pepperoncini, and onion. *1934 Macklind Ave.*

PHOTOGRAPH: SPENCER PERNIKOFF

WORTH THE DRIVE

HEATHER BUBLICK AND D'ANDRE CARTER OF SOUL & SMOKE

Pick: 17th Street BBQ, Murphysboro, Illinois
Drive: 5.5 hours
Why it's worth it: "You can feel the legacy just walking through the door. They have a great appetizer menu, like the smoked wings and pork rinds with Magic Dust rub sprinkled on them that gives everything depth. Their sauce is so well balanced, like a cross between Carolina Gold and Memphis style."

TIM FLORES AND GENIE KWON OF KASAMA

Pick: Pizzeria Lola, Minneapolis
Drive: 6.5 hours
Why it's worth it: "This is our favorite pizza in the country, in between Neapolitan and New York style. The crust is always perfectly cooked. We get vanilla soft serve with olive oil and sea salt and two pizzas—usually one more basic like the Sweet Italian, with fennel sausage and red sauce, and one like the Hawaii Pie-O, with pineapple and bacon."

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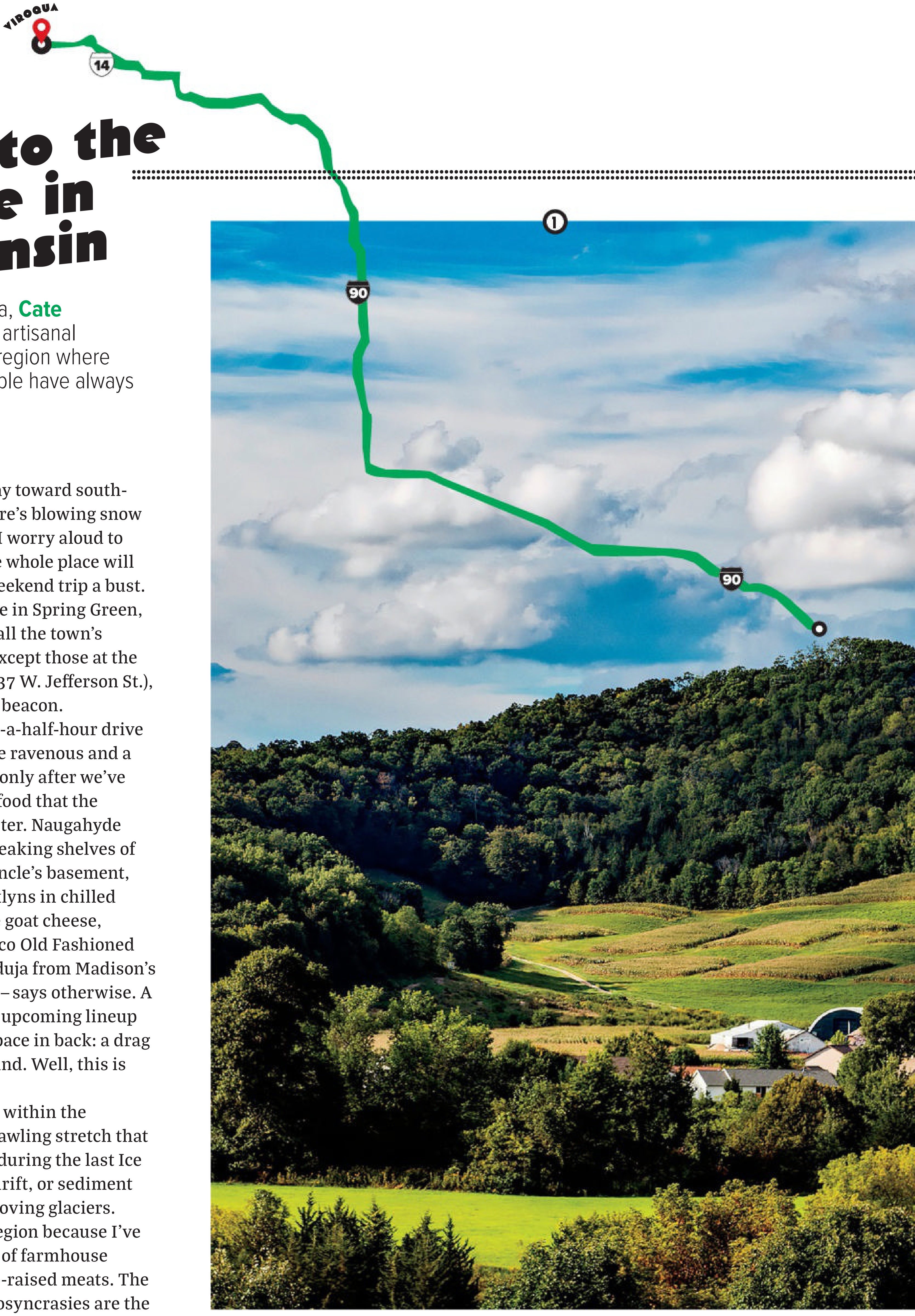
Back to the Future in Wisconsin

In the Driftless Area, **Cate Huguelet** finds an artisanal cheese-and-meat region where small and sustainable have always been a way of life.



All along the highway toward southwest Wisconsin, there's blowing snow and a hard sky, and I worry aloud to my husband that the whole place will be shut down, the weekend trip a bust. By the time we arrive in Spring Green, night has inked out all the town's windowpanes – all except those at the **Slowpoke Lounge** (137 W. Jefferson St.), whose glow seems a beacon.

After a three-and-a-half-hour drive from Chicago, we are ravenous and a little dazed, and it's only after we've ordered drinks and food that the place begins to register. Naugahyde swivel chairs and creaking shelves of vintage vinyl read uncle's basement, but our meal – Brooklyns in chilled coupes, Alpine-style goat cheese, citrus-accented Wisco Old Fashioned salami and feisty 'nduja from Madison's Underground Meats – says otherwise. A chalkboard lists the upcoming lineup for a performance space in back: a drag show, a bluegrass band. Well, this is eclectic, I think.

Spring Green sits within the Driftless Area, a sprawling stretch that remained unfrozen during the last Ice Age and thus lacks drift, or sediment left in the wake of moving glaciers. We've come to the region because I've heard tell of an idyll of farmhouse cheeses and pasture-raised meats. The region's geologic idiosyncrasies are the

1 The sprawling farmland of the Driftless Area **2** Charcuterie plate at Slowpoke Lounge **3** Driftless Café

GOOD ENERGY
=
GOOD FOOD
③

key to its culinary identity, *Wisconsin Foodie* host and Driftless native Luke Zahm explained to me before my visit. Hills and deep valleys make large-scale agriculture impossible, and in the 1980s local farmers began pooling their products as a means of survival. This cooperative model caught on, and, by necessity, the low-impact farming methods have persisted. Today, the concentration of organic farms in Vernon County is rivaled by only one other U.S. county. You might say Driftless is the future, except small and sustainable aren't correctives here. They're just life.

4 Sarah Clemens of Noble Rind Cheese Company **5** Sweet potato fondue at Driftless Café **6** Root vegetable grain bowl at Pearlfield Bistro & Bakehouse

In the morning, it's onward 40 miles north to Viroqua, a small town with an outsize reputation for good food. "No jerks," reads a handwritten sign at our first stop, **Maybe Lately's** (117 N. Main St.). In the snug dining room, I watch low-key servers bounce among old-timers in Carhartt coats, little families, and a remote-worker type. The mood is jokey. Conversations commingle. Over veggie hash and a biscuit (made with locally milled flour) that's so buttery-tender it prompts a sigh, I start to wonder if I'm the jerk. As Chicagoans, we congratulate ourselves on our cosmopolitanism; yet with our profusion of public spaces, we self-segregate. When options are fewer, everyone just coexists.

After breakfast, we stroll down the block to **Noble Rind Cheese Company** (110 W. Court St.), housed in the handsome Fortney, a newly restored historic hotel. Cheesemonger Sarah Clemens guides us through her favorite Driftless offerings. Some – two-year cheddar from Hook's, milky brick from Widmer's – are familiar and tasty. But the ones that stick are new to me: earthy, crystalline bandaged cheddar from Bleu Mont Dairy and a nutty raw sheep's cheese from Hidden Springs. These are small-batch operations without sufficient output to make it to Chicago. To taste the Driftless, you have to come on up here.

No place synthesizes the area's tastes like **Driftless Café** (118 W. Court St.). Owned by Zahm and his wife, Ruthie, and helmed by Evanston transplant Mary Kastman (both she and Zahm have earned James Beard Award nominations), it's dedicated to local sourcing – a radical proposition in a region that's crusted in snow a good chunk of the year. For all that earnestness, it's not a precious place; there's a kids' menu, and pizza too. We sit beside the front window, and during our meal – Organic Valley tenderloin over buttery mash, a mammoth grazing board, sweet potato fondue, and crisp-battered walleye – it begins snowing heavily. Perhaps it's a trick of the room's oak tones, but just then it feels like the warmest place you could want to be.

If cheese hangovers exist, we have ripping ones the next morning and, on sheer willpower, we drive 50 miles west to La Valle, the home of **Carr Valley Cheese** (S3797 County Road G). The variety of cow, goat, and sheep offerings here, some internationally awarded, is staggering. Early birds can observe the curd-making process through a viewing window while sampling the spoils. When I learn that we've missed out, I'm secretly relieved, but that doesn't stop me from picking up some Glacier Penta Crème blue and cocoa-rubbed Cardona for later.

Thirty minutes south, we stop in Richland Center at **Pearlfield Bistro & Bakehouse** (212 N. Main St.), run by Driftless Café alum Lyndsay Byrnes. The menu is homey and wholesome; we have lentil soup and a root vegetable grain bowl and afterward feel human again. Soon we'll make our way back to the frigid interstate, but on Byrnes's recommendation, we detour to **Wild Hills Winery** in Muscoda (30940 Oakridge Dr.). Perched above wooded glens, the vineyards make a fabulous picnic backdrop, probably; in winter, they're host to snowshoe tours. Thinking of Midwestern wines I've met, I brace for syrupy sweetness. When instead I smell cherry and warm spice, I ask the tasting room attendant if all the grapes are grown onsite. She schools me on cold-hardy varieties that thrive here, like Frontenac and Marechal Foch. "It's like the Driftless has its own wine language," I note. She nods, then adds that they also stock beer in the cooler. It's Wisconsin, after all. **C**

PHOTOGRAPHY: *PREVIOUS SPREAD* (LANDSCAPE) CAROL M. HIGHSMITH ARCHIVE, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS; (CHEESE BOARD) HANNAH ANDERSON; (KITCHEN) DREW SHONKA PHOTOGRAPHY. *THIS PAGE* (CLEMENS) JENNIFER CASSELLIUS/PINK SPRUCE PHOTOGRAPHY; (FOOD) CATE HUGUELET

Southern Comfort

Everybody seems to moving to Nashville these days, including a collection of former Chicagoans who have brought some Windy City soul to the Music City.

By Peter Gianopulos

PHOTOGRAPH: JOEY FECCI/YOLAN

Expat chef: Tony Mantuano
Peekytoe crab ravioli. Risotto with saffron, shrimp, and tomato cream. Truffled gnocchi. At **Yolan**, Mantuano hasn't just transported the suave Italian glamour he offered at Michigan Avenue's Spiaggia; he's building luxe menus around delicacies sourced from Tennessee farms and Old World food artisans. *403 Fourth Ave. S.*

Expat chef: Mathew Rice
Those are, indeed, real rainbow cupcake sprinkles lacquered into the floor at **Pink Door Cookies**. Having worked at Girl & the Goat, Nightwood, and the Publican, Rice is now translating his favorite childhood desserts and brunch specials into soft-baked cookies that taste like pineapple upside-down cakes, French toast, and blueberry pancakes. *321 Hart St.*

Expat team: Land & Sea Dept.
Ever wonder what a tavern-style pizza might taste like if it were liberated from its South Side roots? The answer's waiting at **Dicey's Pizza & Tavern**, where the group behind Parson's and Longman & Eagle serves crispy pies topped with Southern favorites (smoked bacon, Peppadew peppers, dill pickles, chili sauce) and shots inspired by Mr. Pibb. *425 Chestnut St.*

Expat bartender: Demi Natoli
In the mood for some hardcore honky-tonk kitsch, darlin'? Go see Natoli. The former Lost Lake star now whips up country tipples at **Graduate Nashville**'s animatronic karaoke bar, Cross-Eyed Critters Watering Hole, and pours spiked chai teas and frozen spritzes at the hotel's frilly, all-pink rooftop lounge, White Limozeen. *101 20th Ave. N.*

WORTH THE DRIVE

SOO AHN OF ADALINA

Pick: Red Light Ramen, Milwaukee
Drive: 2 hours
Why it's worth it: "I first went when this was a pop-up at chef Justin Carlisle's Ardent; at 11 p.m. they'd turn it into a ramen shop. Now it has its own location but with the same feel: vibrant colors, amazing food, and good cocktails. I can't stay away from the tonkotsu; every time I go, that's what I get."

MICHAEL LACHOWICZ OF GEORGE TROIS

The pick: Lake Placid Inn, Minocqua, Wisconsin
Drive: 5.5 hours
Why it's worth it: "It looks like an odd diner, like a Wisconsin supper club. There's nothing sophisticated about this place—just great food in a fun atmosphere. I go for breakfast and get the Weed Bed: crispy hash browns topped with eggs, cut-up sausage links, chopped bacon, a slice of American cheese, and hollandaise sauce."

Why They Carry

Photographer Christian K. Lee's portraits offer a fresh view of Chicago's Black gun owners.

GROWING UP ON THE SOUTH and West Sides, Christian K. Lee got a firsthand look at responsible gun ownership: His father, a state police officer, kept a firearm at home. But that experience didn't jibe with depictions on TV. "I never saw a positive image of African Americans around guns," Lee says. "So I started to make those images that I knew existed."

While stationed with the army in Texas, Lee began photographing Black gun owners and listening to their stories. He continued the project after moving back to Chicago, where he's pursuing a master's in photography at the School of the Art Institute. Coinciding with a striking rise in Black gun ownership in the United States, his series, *Armed Doesn't Mean Dangerous,* offers a novel perspective on a charged subject. "I'm not trying to promote gun ownership," he says. Instead, he wants to spotlight why Black people are arming themselves, namely systemic problems such as ineffective policing and communities made more dangerous from disinvestment. "When people look at gun violence, they just look at how to limit the gun. We need to get more to the root of the issue."

KOURTNEY REDMOND

Redmond—photographed with his wife, Victoria, in their Matteson home—sees two types of gun wielders shown in the media: police officers and "bad guys." But he doesn't fit either. With self-defense in mind, he acquired his firearm owner's identification card when he was 18. Redmond, who served eight years in the Marine Corps, is now a firearms instructor and the Illinois director of the National African American Gun Association. "Some people don't want you to carry a firearm," says the 42-year-old. "They think that they're just to kill."

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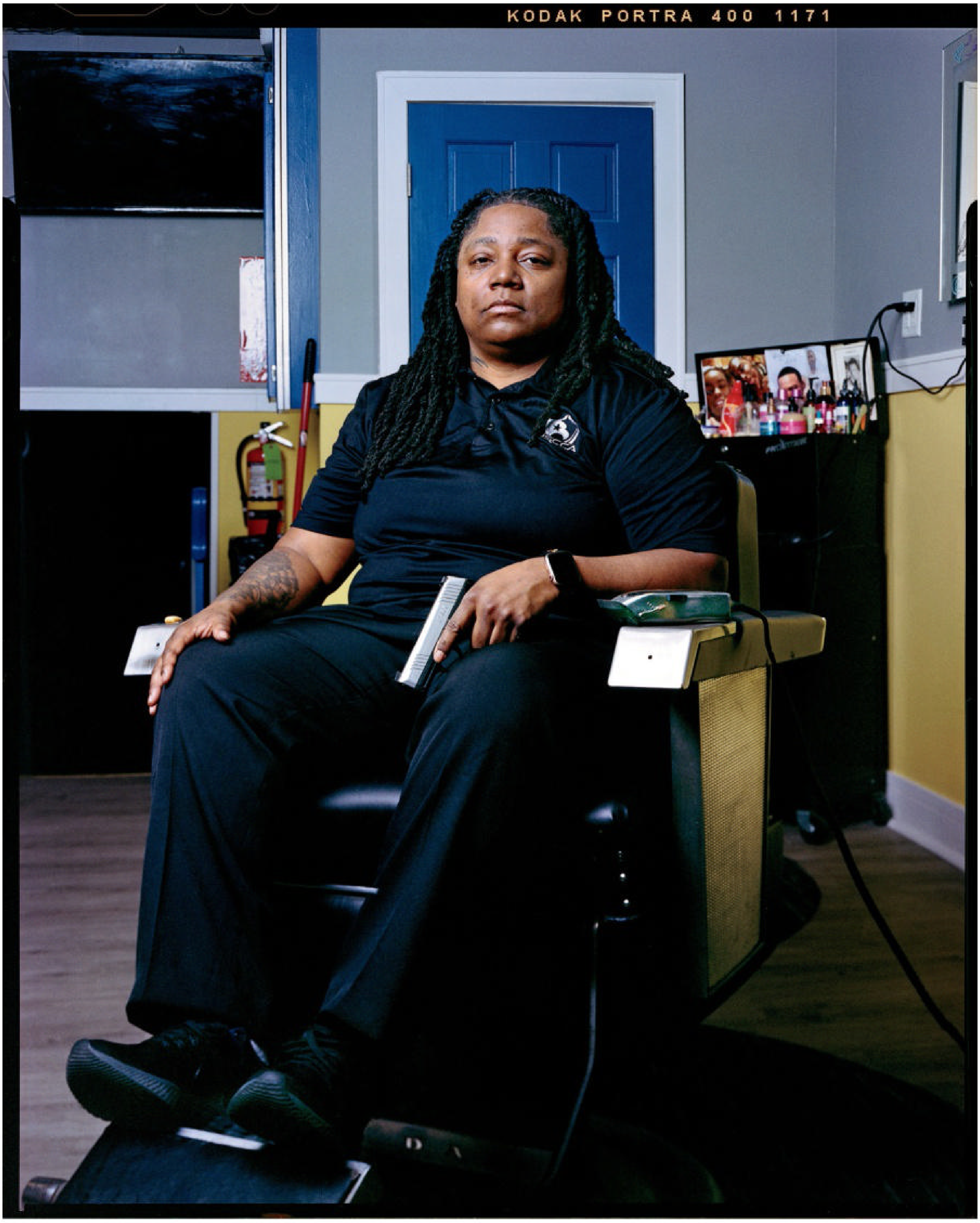
“We sleep better at night knowing

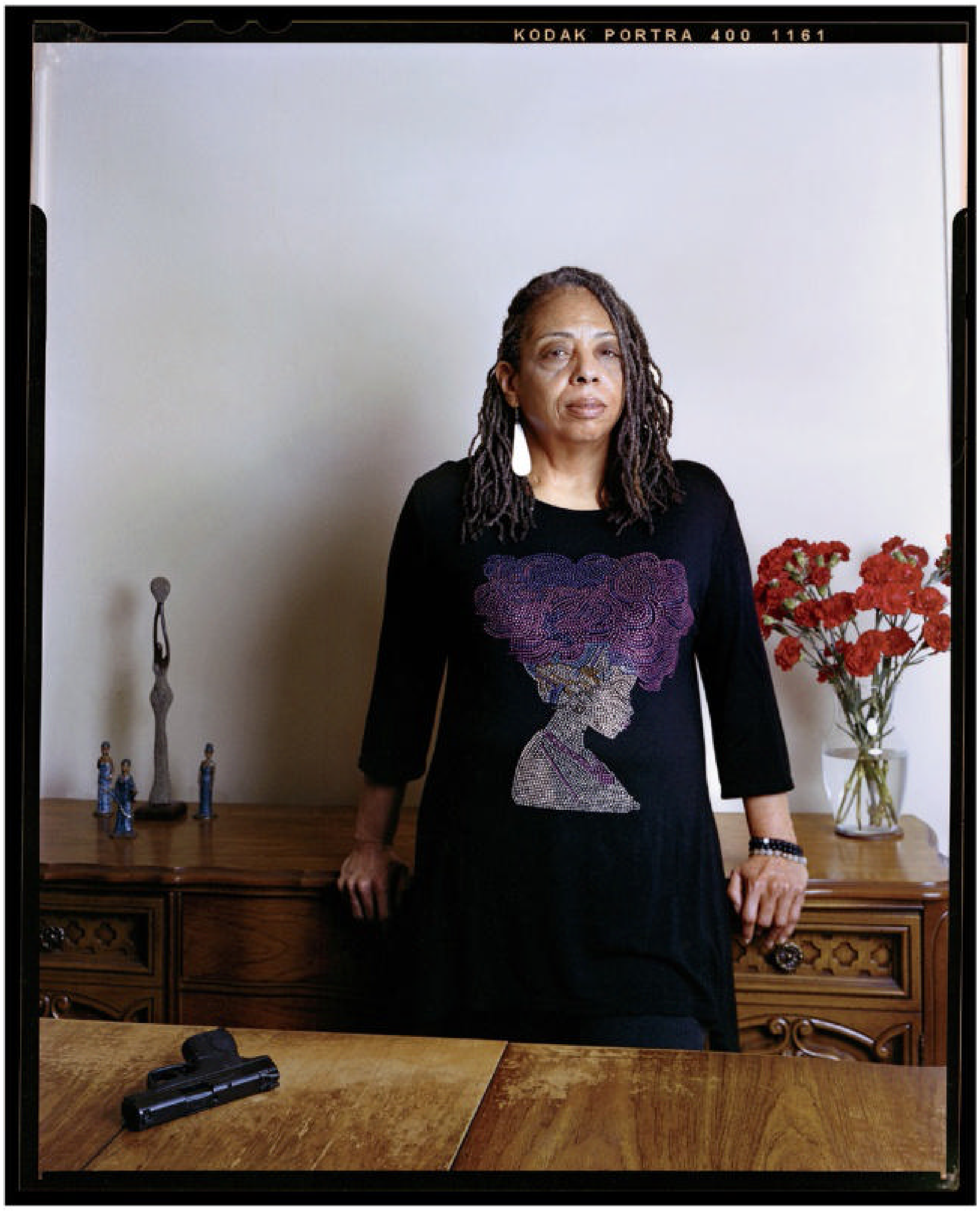


LASHAN PETTIES

Petties, the owner of Go Gettaz Barber & Beauty Salon in Austin, was in her car in a Wendy’s drive-through when someone pointed a gun at her. Though she emerged unscathed, the incident made her want to start carrying a weapon. Eventually, she became a concealed-carry instructor. She says she has licensed some 750 people in the city. “We sleep better at night knowing we are well protected in this salon,” says Petties, 49. “Before you come in here thinking you’re going to do something, you’re going to have to take a second look—and a second guess.”

we are well protected in this salon.”

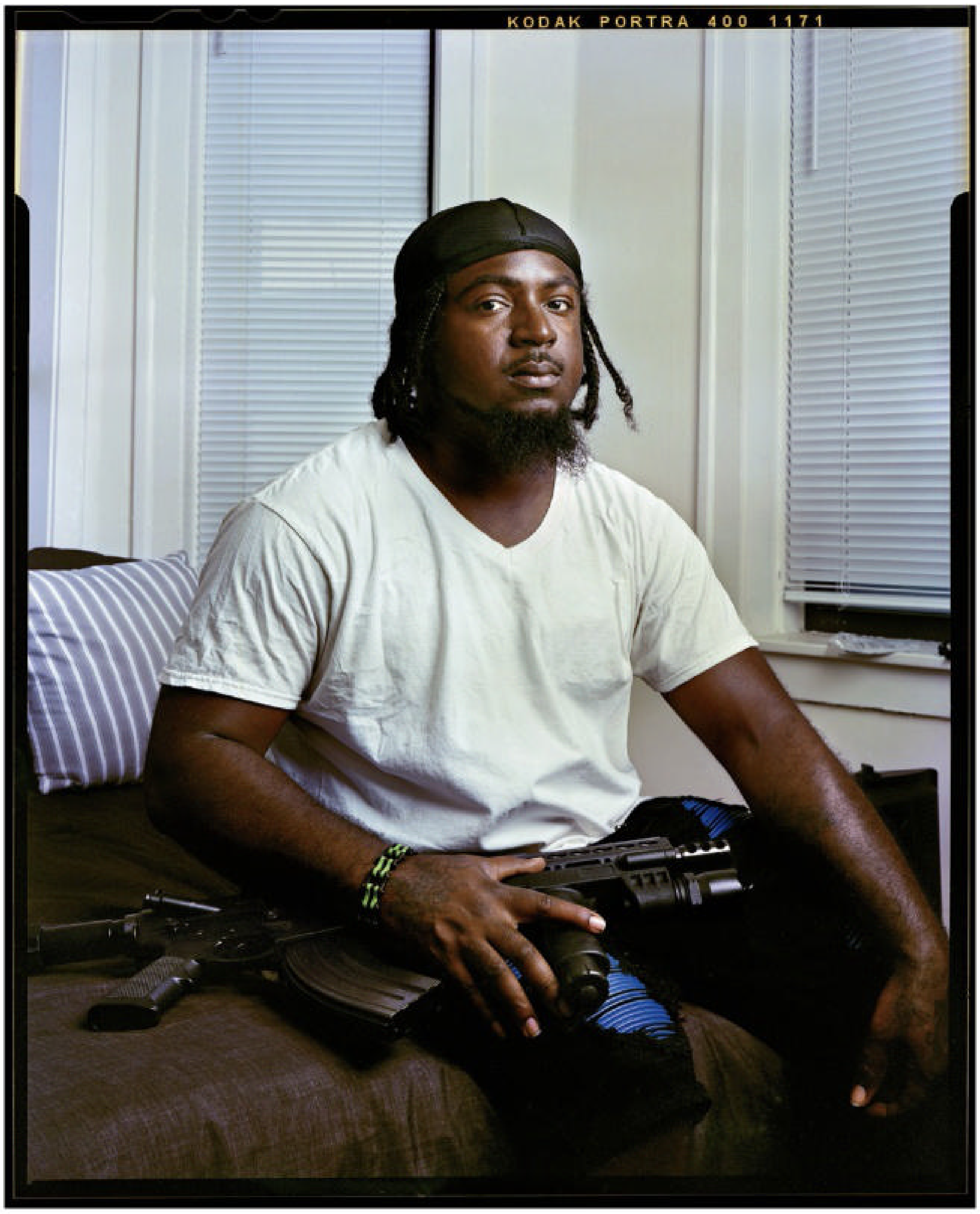
—*Lashan Petties*



RENEE NOWLIN

Nowlin considers herself a survivor, not a victim. But it wasn’t always that way. In the mid-1980s, the South Chicago resident was stabbed after she ended a relationship. “I started to feel that I needed to do things to protect myself,” Nowlin, 60, says. She now carries a firearm with her. “Because of everything that’s currently going on with crime and carjacking and things of that nature, it makes me feel I need to be prepared for any situation.”

“You look at a person like me and think,

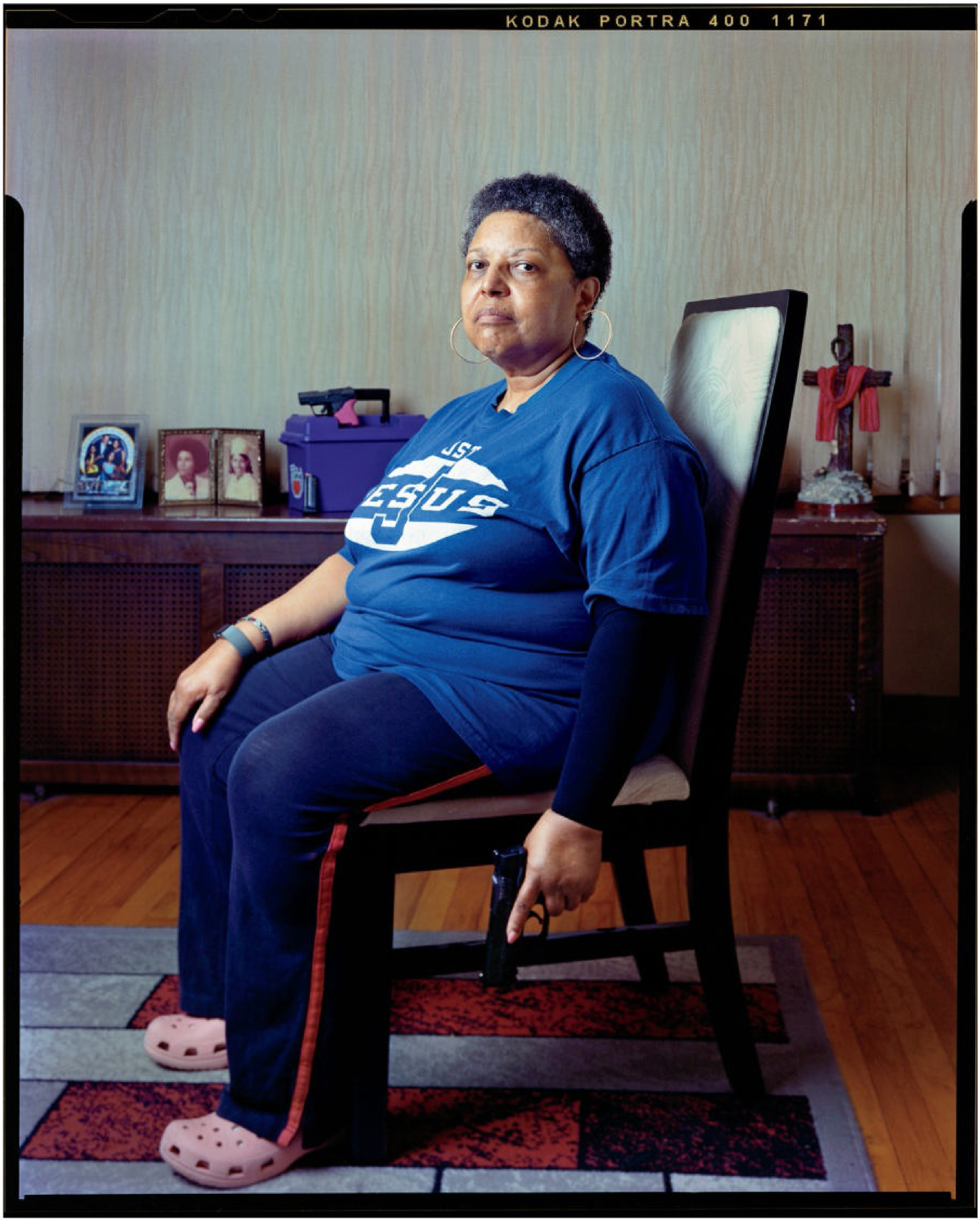


CHUCK CHEW

The Irving Park resident was introduced to guns at an early age, when his uncles would take him hunting. “Just the feeling it gave me, that made me want to get one—and the feeling of being able to protect your family and yourself,” he says. Chew, 37, gained further firearm experience while attending Carver Military Academy, and he now works as a bodyguard. (His semiautomatic rifle is no longer legal to purchase in Illinois under a new law, but previous ownership is permitted.) “You look at a person like me and think, Here is a thug. But that’s not the case. When the Second Amendment was created, we wasn’t in mind.”

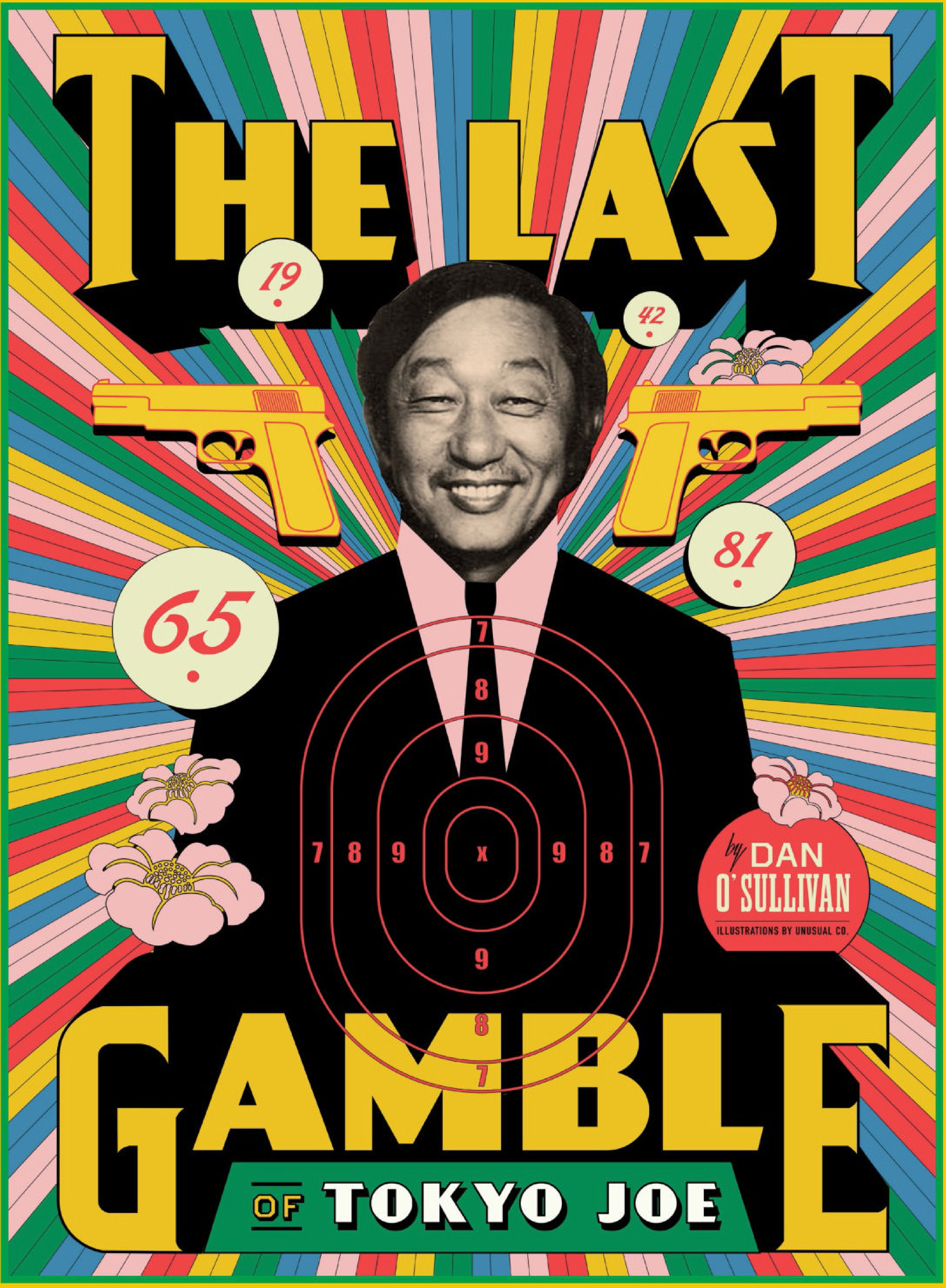
Here is a thug. But that’s not the case.”

—Chuck Chew



ANGELA ROSS WILLIAMS

“The crime that happens in our community is because they’re not providing enough resources to take care of our people,” says the 68-year-old. After deciding to arm herself for protection, the Alabama native noticed that she wasn’t always welcomed by the Chicago firearms world: “Being Black and a woman, going into gun stores here made me feel unworthy. Like I had no rights to be there, and what did I want to do with the gun? I felt angry. It reminded me of the shame we felt during the Jim Crow era.”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THE LAST GAMBLE OF TOKYO JOE

by DAN O'SULLIVAN

ILLUSTRATIONS BY UNUSUAL CO.

KEN ETO ROSE THROUGH THE RANKS OF THE CHICAGO MOB, AND THEN IT TRIED TO KILL HIM. THE UNDERWORLD WOULD NEVER BE THE SAME.

Ken Eto left the meeting at Caesar DiVarco's club on Wabash knowing they were going to kill him. It was midday. The plan was to get up with Johnny Gattuso and Jay Campise that evening, then they'd take him to Vince Solano and they'd all have dinner together. Eto walked back to his black '76 Torino coupe, illegally parked, and saw he'd gotten a ticket.

He drove around for a while. He had to figure out what to do, or what he could do. Around 3 p.m., he got back home to Bolingbrook. The thing was the life insurance. Mary Lou needed to know where the $100,000 policy was. He also had to give her the pawn slips – tell her to get everything out of hock by the end of next week, February 18, 1983, or she'd lose it all. And the lease for the restaurant in Lyons – Mary Lou needed to make sure it got signed. That way, after he was gone, at least some money would be coming in.

He was going out that night, he told his wife – his last dinner with his friends. She asked if he wanted her to go with him.

No, he didn't. "I hope," he added, "they'll be happy."

Eto took a bath. Drying off, the 63-year-old put on a yellow woven dress shirt, dress slacks, his gray, blue, and white tweed sports coat from Morry's, and his brown Florsheim buckled loafers. It was already dark out. He had to get to Portage Park by 7:30. He slipped on his tan raincoat and gloves and walked out the door.

Published in partnership with Epic Magazine

Ken Eto sat in his Torino. The temperature had dropped below 30, and the car's heater wasn't working. His friends, his good friends, like the ones he'd see tonight, called him Joe. He didn't know the restaurant they were going to, the one where they'd meet Vince. After nearly half an hour of sitting in the cold, he turned the ignition, reversed into the street, and set off to Chicago.

Driving by the American Legion post where Campise had a regular card game, Eto could see Gattuso already outside, scanning the street. By the time he parked, they were both on the sidewalk, Gattuso and Campise. They took off their right gloves to shake his hand, saying their hellos.

The three of them started walking down the street. Eto asked whose car they were taking.

"Why not yours?" Campise said.

Gattuso squeezed into the back seat of the coupe, settling into the passenger side. Campise rode shotgun, directing Eto where to go. It was a nice little Italian place off Harlem, he said – if he took Narragansett all the way down to where it met Fullerton, then took a right, it was around there.

Eto looked at Gattuso in the back seat. Gattuso didn't say much.

As they got closer, Campise told Eto to turn at the alley and keep going back – there was a parking lot close to the restaurant, near an old movie theater.

"Go park at the other end," Campise said, gesturing, "so we don't have to walk far."

Eto turned the Torino down the alley. There was only one other car in the lot, an empty old two-door beater. He drove to the end of the lot and slipped the coupe into park. Looking out the windshield, beyond a rusted metal guardrail, he saw a dark stand of bare trees and the rear of the Montclare Theatre.

Johnny Gattuso raised the .22 behind Ken Eto's head and fired. Then he fired again, a ricochet cracking the windshield. Convulsing, Eto slumped over across the front seat. Johnny fired once more into his head.

Campise and Gattuso scrambled out of the car and into the night.

THE TROUBLE HAD ALL started about two and a half years earlier, in the summer of 1980. It was a Wednesday. Ken Eto had been sitting in room 127 at the Holiday Inn in Melrose Park, tabulating the week's numbers-betting slips on his Royal portable, when there'd been a knock at the door. He got up and opened it to a pretty brunette he'd never seen before.

"Oh," she said, flustered. "You're not my husband."

FBI special agent Elaine Corbitt Smith had meant to knock on the door of a room across the hall, the surveillance post from which her fellow federal agents were staking out Eto. After watching him for months through binoculars and telephoto lenses, it was the first time she had been face to face with the man.

Impassive, Eto closed the door.

Agent Smith turned and walked to the right room. The G-men inside snickered as she entered.

Ken Eto's power to intimidate might not have been apparent in that brief encounter or to any of the thousands of people passing him each day downtown. Per his FBI file, Eto – "Hair: Black, Straight," "Complexion: Dark, Sallow," "Occupation: Gambler" – stood 5-foot-5 and weighed less than 150 pounds. He enjoyed dancing, cooking, and watching baseball. He had some knowledge of Spanish. His specialty as a gourmand was chicken Vesuvio, with peas and buttery wine sauce.

Eto had been married three times and was father to six children; his youngest son, Stevie, was his fishing buddy. As Steve Eto tells it, his dad always preferred children to adults, and fishing to the world of adult doings. But there were other ways Ken Eto was very unlike other fathers.

For one, other dads weren't mentioned in the Chicago newspapers constantly – described invariably as gangsters, racketeers, underworld kingpins. "I used to keep a scrapbook of clippings in a little box of things of my

PHOTOGRAPHY: *PREVIOUS SPREAD* KEN'ICHI OGURI/TORNADO FILM; *THIS PAGE* RAZOOMGAME SHUTTERSTOCK

father," Steve recalls. "I remember at some point thinking, Well, my dad is doing something that's not quite legal."

He had seen his dad holding court at a restaurant on Rush Street, receiving envelopes that were jammed with money. "There was one time I asked him, 'So what do you do for a living?' " says Steve. "And he said, 'It's none of your fucking business.' So I didn't ask him again."

Growing up half-Japanese in the Chicago suburbs of the '70s wasn't easy for Ken Eto's youngest son. One day, Steve approached his father, seeking advice. Bullies at his predominantly Italian American high school were harassing him. What should he do?

"Next time one of those kids comes up to you," Steve remembers his father saying, "pull out a weapon."

Steve wasn't a violent kid. But he dutifully armed himself; an old-fashioned corkscrew, T-shaped with a wooden handle, would do. And one day at school, one of the usual tormentors walked up to him.

Steve pulled out the corkscrew. "I popped him in the arm with it. And when I pulled it out, it pulled out a chunk of his muscle," Steve recalls. "He looked at me and he looked at the corkscrew and he ran."

Later, Steve remembers, the police came to his house. His mother, Judith, called Ken, who talked to the officers on the porch as Steve watched out the window. Suddenly they left. His father came back into the house. There would be no further legal consequences for what had happened. But there was something Steve needed to know.

"If you ever use a weapon on somebody, kill him," his father said. " 'Cause if you kill him, I'll get you off." Then he added: "If you don't kill him, you'll have an enemy for the rest of your life."

"I knew my dad was *somebody*," says Steve. "He wasn't a run-of-the-mill Joe."

Elaine Smith would have agreed. For much of 1980, Ken Eto had been her obsession. A Chicago native, Smith had started at the FBI just the previous year, when she was 34, surviving the formidable recruitment and training regimen to become one of about 300 female agents in the bureau at the time. She joined her husband, Tom, her high school sweetheart, as a special agent, and from her first day, the former schoolteacher had been hell-bent on joining the Chicago office's organized crime unit. After only four months as an agent, she succeeded.

Smith began doing her research on the vast shadow economy of the Chicago underworld. On March 18, 1980, opening a file passed along by a friend, Smith encountered Ken Eto for the first time. FBI No. 276-777-3. Chicago Police Department record 191-799. Known aliases: Joe Montana, Tokyo Joe, and Joe the Jap.

Looking over Eto's file, marveling at the unlikely prominence of a Japanese American in the Chicago Outfit, Smith saw something profound: "a potential jewel," in her words, a man she would come to believe to be a sleeper kingpin in the Chicago underworld, and one who had escaped any meaningful consequences for decades.

"He was known to be as high-ranking as one could be in the Chicago Outfit, as high-ranking as a non-Sicilian could be," says Jeremy Margolis, who served as an assistant U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Illinois from 1973 to 1984. "He was known, he was trusted. He was in the inner circle. And he was the most prolific numbers boss that the Chicago Outfit had."

Johnny Gattuso raised the .22 behind Ken Eto's head and fired. Then he fired again, a ricochet cracking the windshield. Convulsing, Eto slumped over across the front seat.

The Outfit owned the night in Chicago. There was no force greedier, nor icier in their greed. While their New York brethren favored flashier, public gunfire, the Outfit preferred to deal death quietly – forced disappearances, the fear and dread of the missing's loved ones confirmed only weeks, months, years later, when an abandoned car in some godforsaken neighborhood finally got popped open. "Trunk music," as they called it.

This was the underlying threat that had maintained the power of the Outfit. By the time Smith had zeroed in on the Chicago mob, it was an international enterprise. Swollen with money from the bathtub gin and rum-running of the Prohibition era, trailblazing gangster Johnny "the Fox" Torrio had bequeathed his empire to a well-liked former bookkeeper named Alphonse Capone in 1925. In the postwar era, reigning don Tony "Big Tuna" Accardo professionalized the venture, until the Outfit operated much like a massive corporate conglomerate, dominating a mix of legitimate and illegal businesses stretching from Chicago to California and far beyond. According to one mob historian, at the height of Accardo's rule, the Outfit was earning an estimated $6 billion a year in global revenue.

FBI AGENT ELAINE SMITH MARVELED AT THE UNLIKELY PROMINENCE OF A JAPANESE AMERICAN IN THE CHICAGO OUTFIT, A MAN SHE WOULD COME TO BELIEVE TO BE A SLEEPER KINGPIN.

"The sole goal of organized crime is to enrich the members. That's all they care about," says John J. Binder, author of *Al Capone's Beer Wars*. And, while not Italian, Ken Eto was one of its biggest moneymakers. Eto's lofty position in the Chicago underworld was unusual for an outsider, but the syndicate had always been more farsighted than other crime families in promoting gangsters of other ethnicities.

It was less a mark of tolerance than proof of its ambition. Ever since Capone first employed his squad of "American Boys" – a gang of Midwestern killers who looked more like police officers than Mafia hit men – non-Italians had occupied important positions in the Outfit. But all these men had been white. Ken Eto was not. And he wasn't some despised underling; he was one of the bosses.

Eto was with the North Side crew, a crown jewel of the Outfit's Chicago holdings, based out of the Rush Street nightlife strip. "He looked after the mob's gambling interests, particularly," says legendary reporter John "Bulldog" Drummond, the former resident "mobologist" at CBS-2. Chief among Eto's illicit enterprises was bolita, a lottery game similar to the longer-established policy racket and hugely popular within Chicago's growing Latin American community.

Drummond, known for surprising gangsters on the street with a cigar clenched in his teeth, first met Eto in the early '70s as the mobster was being bailed out of police custody by one of his many young girlfriends. "He seemed like a mild-mannered guy, although I don't think he was," says Drummond. "He was a good provider for the mob. In other words, he produced money, and that's the name of the game with those guys."

While the slight, raspy-voiced Joseph "Caesar" DiVarco served as Eto's immediate manager on Rush Street, the greater North Side was skippered by Vince Solano. Officially, Solano was president of the Laborers' International Union of North America Local 1. But unofficially, he was in charge of all Outfit business north of the river, between the lake and the North Branch. A cautious, experienced, and somewhat stiff labor racketeer, he rarely socialized with his soldiers. He had stopped holding the annual North Side Christmas parties, at which he handed out envelopes of cash, for fear of FBI surveillance.

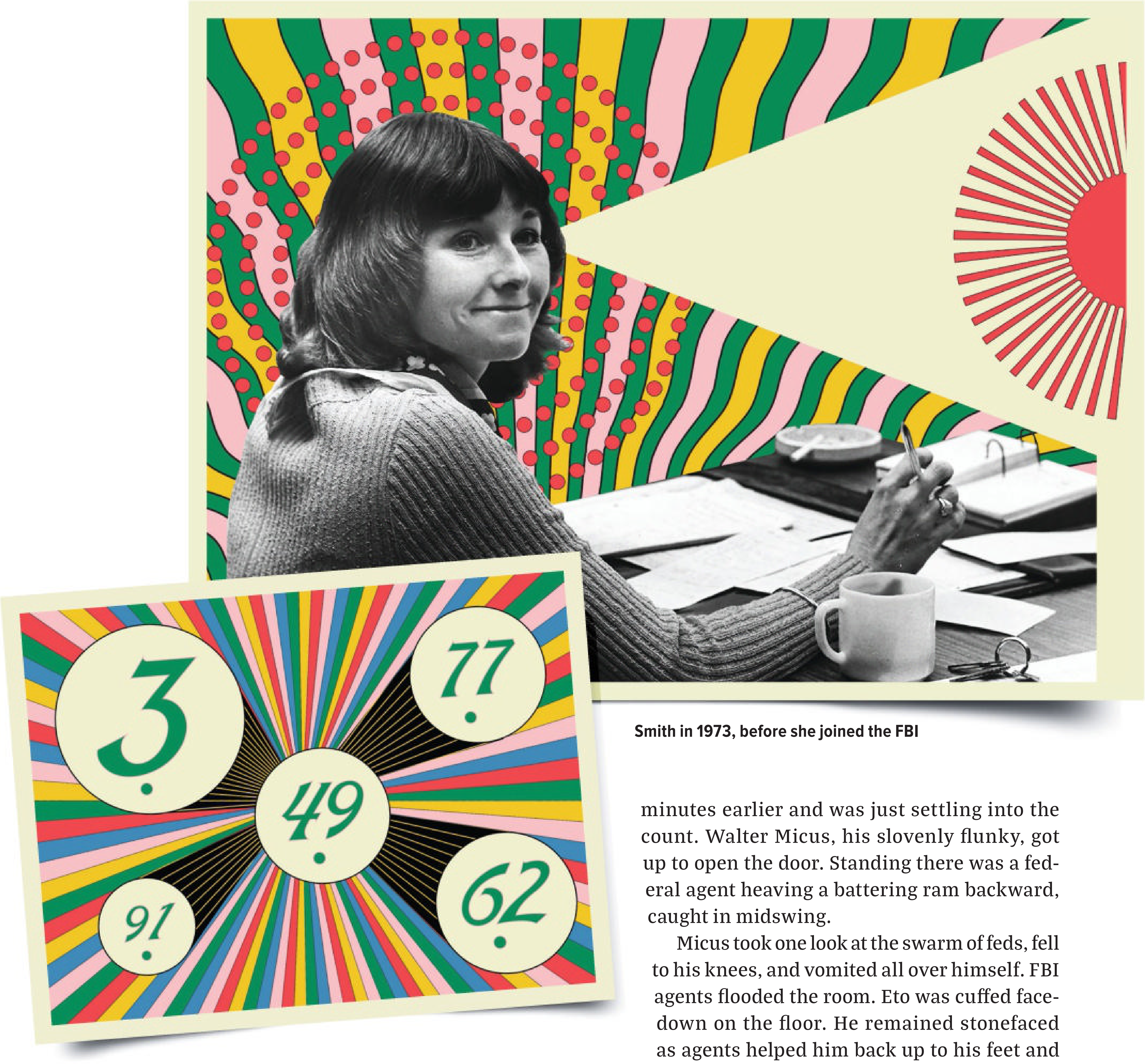
From his perch on Solano's North Side, running Rush Street nightclubs like Faces and Bourbon Street, Ken Eto served as the Chicago Outfit's most adept minority relations specialist – a gambling czar of the highest caliber, able to extract millions of dollars over the years from Chicago's Puerto Rican, Black, and Chinese American communities. In just the couple of months leading up to Smith knocking on Eto's door, the total sum of betting in the bolita racket exceeded $3 million.

Such moneymaking acumen in his roughly three decades working for the Outfit had earned Eto his reputation. About once a month or so, he would call up Solano at the union hall, saying it was "the pizza man," and they'd meet at a nearby IHOP on the Northwest Side for Eto to update him on gambling operations.

But Eto wasn't just some harmless guy running a profitable enterprise. "He was generally viewed," says Margolis, the former prosecutor, "to either have had blood on his hands directly or certainly indirectly. He was viewed as a very bad and dangerous man."

In 1958, the police had questioned him about a gruesome homicide. Santiago "Chavo" Gonzalez was still well dressed when found in a vacant lot, befitting his monied stature in the Puerto Rican community as a bolita operator. He had been disemboweled. Gonzalez's frantic widow said it must have been about gambling – he'd been badly beaten with a tire iron by some

PHOTOGRAPH: ELAINE SMITH



Smith in 1973, before she joined the FBI

men the year before on Clark Street, and though she had not seen him among the men who'd dragged Chavo out of their home, she was unequivocal that "a Chinese man named Joe" was their boss.

Delving deeper into Eto's file, Elaine Smith would soon find there were more homicides attributed to his takeover of the bolita and policy rackets in the 1950s and '60s, all unsolved. Men dragged from their homes, dumped in vacant lots, their throats slit and bellies slashed. But even more troubling was Smith's suspicion that Eto must have enjoyed the protection of corrupt Chicago police officials.

A few days after the hotel door mishap, there was another knock at room 127. Eto had arrived about 10 minutes earlier and was just settling into the count. Walter Micus, his slovenly flunky, got up to open the door. Standing there was a federal agent heaving a battering ram backward, caught in midswing.

Micus took one look at the swarm of feds, fell to his knees, and vomited all over himself. FBI agents flooded the room. Eto was cuffed facedown on the floor. He remained stonefaced as agents helped him back up to his feet and began searching the room.

This time, they had a warrant. And there all the slips were, on the table, in front of the Prince of Bolita himself, vassal of the Outfit, the crime syndicate powerful enough to forge history and break cities. Ken Eto, still handcuffed and betraying no emotion, asked if a federal agent could take his glasses out of his front pocket, please, and put them on his face.

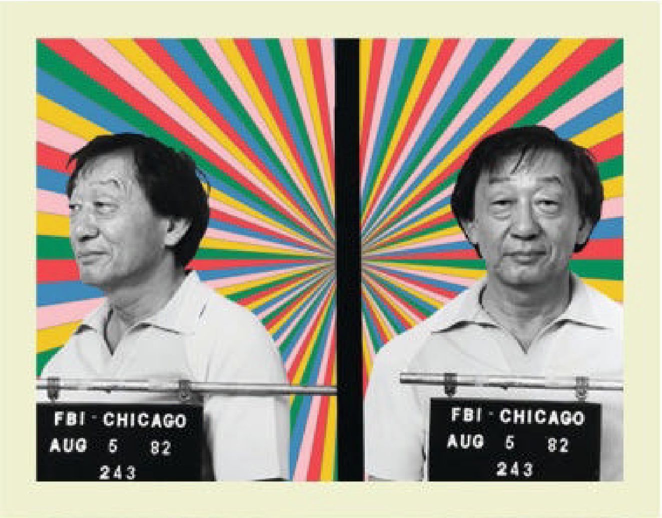
IN THE LEATHER-BOUND JOURNAL HE KEPT in 1919, now falling apart with age, Mamoru Eto recorded an entry on October 19, at 7:45 p.m., in kanji so old-fashioned it is difficult to read today: "My wife safely delivers. I am truly grateful. … And he is a boy. My joy knows no bounds."

While Mamoru had been born in a little town on Kyushu, the southwesternmost of Japan's main islands, his firstborn son, Ken, had entered the world on the outskirts of Stockton, California, at the edge of the San Joaquin Valley. The Golden State may have been the winner's circle to those who'd stormed west, but for the Japanese who'd crossed an ocean to get there, America's back garden was only the beginning of their journey.

In old photos of him as a young man, with his shaved head and black eyes, Mamoru Eto blazes with presence. A decorated combat veteran of the Russo-Japanese War, Mamoru claimed descendance from samurai, the caste of warriors who'd been stripped of their swords and powers a decade before his birth. He was already 34 when he'd left for the United States, planning to stay only long enough to study in Massachusetts. When he arrived in San Francisco, he saw migrant workers who had come to America hoping to someday return to their homelands, only to gamble away their earnings each night.

He'd intended to complete his studies and return to Japan's Kwansei Gakuin University as a professor armed with an American education. He would coach rugby and teach kendo, the Japanese art of swordsmanship. But Mamoru never made it to Massachusetts; instead, he sent for his wife, Kura, and 2-year-old daughter, Hitoko, to join him in California. Two years later, Ken was born, and the family moved an hour southeast to Livingston, where, acre by acre, from tenancy to small holding, Japanese farmers were gaining a foothold in California agriculture.

Something had altered Mamoru Eto in California. He had seen it one day in the sky over the fields where he worked as a laborer: a religious vision, an image of God. The severe Christianity he zealously adopted would dominate the rest of his life, and the lives of his young family.



Most of the year, Mamoru would work on the farm, but in the winter, he would leave his family to travel across California, preaching in Japanese to other migrant workers across the state. Kura was left behind to care for the children, surrounded by towns where billboards with messages like "No More Japanese Wanted Here" loomed over the roads.

When Ken was in the fourth grade, the entire family moved to Pasadena, where Mamoru had secured a job tending gardens. As Ken's sister Helen recalled years later, her father established the First Japanese Nazarene Church in their living room, preaching incessantly at home. Under the unrelenting strain of Mamoru's Christian fundamentalism, his wife suffered the most. Kura seemed invariably confined to her bed, prone to deep, dark bouts of depression.

The Eto patriarch was an abusive martinet who meted out strict punishment. In one instance, he seriously burned Ken's younger brother by holding his wrist to a heating pad. The oldest son, Ken increasingly chafed at his father's brutal treatment. His younger brothers looked up to him as a "tough buddhahead," who stood up to not only their father but also the white children who bullied him for being Japanese.

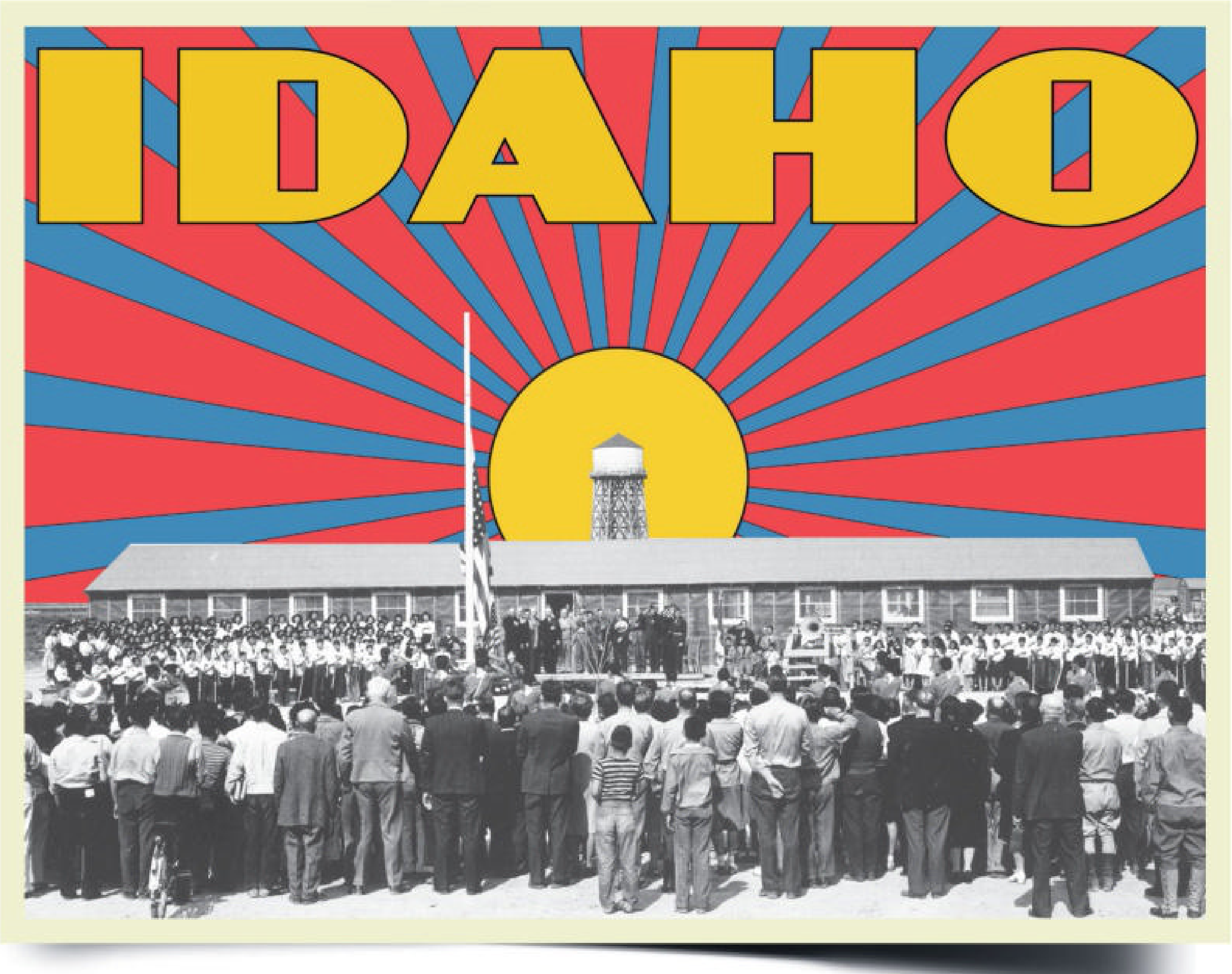
Even as a young teenager, Ken Eto was not going to put up with anything he didn't want. Around the lowest point of the Great Depression, with a quarter of America's workforce unemployed, he ran away from home, drifting across California and up to the Pacific Northwest. He would never return to live with his family again.

MORE THAN TWO years after his arrest by the FBI, Ken Eto had accepted that he was going to prison on the bolita charges. He had taken a stipulated bench trial, putting up no defense but not pleading guilty. Summarily convicted on January 18, 1983, he'd take whatever term the judge gave him in the sentencing hearing coming up February 25. It wouldn't be much.

As Eto got his financial affairs in order, he got a call at home: It was Joseph "Big Joe" Arnold, DiVarco's right-hand man. DiVarco wanted to meet. When Eto got to the car dealership on the West Side the next morning, DiVarco explained that the skipper, Vince Solano, was concerned. He hadn't heard from Eto recently, amid all this business on the federal charges.

Eto said there'd been nothing to report. He didn't have any games going, no rackets, no bolita. No sportsbook, even with the Super Bowl a week or so away. He knew he was going to prison and was resigned to it. Nonetheless, DiVarco said, Solano wanted to see him.

PHOTOGRAPH: FBI



Minidoka War Relocation Center, the Japanese American detainment camp where Eto was held during World War II

PHOTOGRAPH: MINIDOKA RELOCATION CENTER, U.S. ARMY WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY

The next morning, Eto went to a pay phone and dialed Local 1. *It's the pizza man*. Solano told him to meet at the usual spot around lunchtime.

When Eto arrived at IHOP, he saw that the boss was already there, alone outside. Eto joined him, and Solano started walking away from the restaurant. He was hunched over, his face cast down at the sidewalk. "I thought I told you to take a trial," he said.

Eto didn't recall Solano saying that. He had figured he'd get less time and still preserve appeals possibilities the way he'd done it. It would only annoy judges and prosecutors to draw out a slam-dunk case, while the Outfit's overlords would never take kindly to a guilty plea.

Well, Solano said, Eto had three choices. One: Appeal. Two: Do his time. Three: Run away.

The two gambling charges carried a max of five years each, and Eto knew he wasn't going to get that much. He certainly wasn't going to run away.

"Appeal it," Solano told him.

OK, he'd appeal it. Vince turned back toward the IHOP. Eto turned alongside him.

"What are you looking back for?" Vince asked, jumpy.

"I thought we were going back," said Eto.

"No."

They kept walking. It was hovering around freezing.

Then Solano asked Eto a question: He still had that restaurant and nightclub in Lyons, right? Yeah, Mary Lou's, named for his wife. It was vacant now, sitting unused. He had an offer on it, a good offer, from a guy in La Grange.

Well, Solano said, Johnny Gattuso had a backer, and Jay Campise wanted to come in as his partner, so Joe should see about meeting with them.

It was an unexpected request, far below Solano's pay grade. And on behalf of Gattuso, of all people, who wasn't even made. Nonetheless, Eto agreed to take the meeting: Orders were orders. He would set something up.

The two men made their way back to the parking lot and Eto's car. Suddenly Solano asked Eto what was in his pocket.

Eto had his hands in his pockets and took one out, holding a pack of cigarettes. The boss eased a bit.

"I thought I saw something," he said.

IN THE WEEKS AFTER THE MARCH 24, 1942, order from the U.S. Army's Western Defense Command that "all persons of Japanese ancestry" on the West Coast would be subject to an 8 p.m. curfew – in response to Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor – one 22-year-old drifter would be caught in violation and arrested near Tacoma, Washington. This was the inaugural entry on the rap sheet of a young Ken Eto.

The curfew was a mere prelude to what was to come. Soon the Western Defense Command would launch a massive civil operation on the Pacific Coast: the forcible detention of ultimately more than 120,000 Japanese

American men, women, and children in desolate concentration camps in the American interior. Eto was sent to the Minidoka War Relocation Center, hastily constructed on the Snake River Plain in the high desert of southern Idaho. His family was held at a camp in Arizona.

Plagued by frequent dust storms, prone to days that hit triple-digit temperatures and nights that fell below freezing, Minidoka, with its armed guards and barbed-wire fences, was a forbidding place. Living in drafty shacks with gaps in the floorboards and little more than tarpaper roofs to keep out the cold, Eto, along with more than 13,000 other Japanese Americans, would spend time there during World War II.

Up until then, Eto had supported himself with seasonal jobs, picking fruit and working in canneries. To survive as a teenage runaway, he'd learned to suss out danger quickly, clocking people who couldn't be trusted, exploiting any opportunities for making money – and observing his fellow migrant workers at the labor camps, particularly while they gambled.

In a similar way, internment would not be a total waste for Ken Eto. As recounted in the pages of the *Minidoka Irrigator*, the inmate-run newspaper, gambling rings were organized throughout the camp system to provide a distraction from the tedium, and Eto took part in them. "He was a great gambler," says former assistant U.S. attorney Margolis. "Just a super card player who understood the numbers." Later, Eto would describe Minidoka as his finishing school, a place that gave him ample opportunity to perfect his skills.

Not that he didn't harbor other feelings about his time in the camp. "We talked about what being a Japanese American meant to him," recalls Margolis, "what it meant to him to be treated the way he was treated. I think that had a real impact on him. He might've done something else with his life had he not felt that kind of bitterness and resentment, and rightly so."

"I UNDERSTAND THAT YOU HAVE A JOB TO DO," ETO TOLD SMITH, "AND TRYING TO CONVINCE ME TO BE A SNITCH IS PART OF IT. BUT THAT IS NOT WHO I AM."

A NIGHT OR TWO AFTER HE'D MET VINCE Solano at the IHOP, Ken Eto got another call from Big Joe Arnold. Johnny Gattuso and Jay Campise were going to be near Eto's restaurant in Lyons the next morning. They'd like to talk to him over coffee about leasing it. At the meeting, the two said they wanted to turn it into a pizzeria. Eto explained that he'd already found someone to lease it, and that another pizzeria in Lyons hadn't done well.

Well, Gattuso said, the way he saw it, he was doing Eto a favor, taking the place off his hands. He promised he'd bring his financial backer the following day at 10 a.m. for a final decision.

That morning, Eto had to drop off his Torino with a mechanic to have the radiator fixed. So Mary Lou followed her husband to the auto shop, then gave him a ride to the restaurant bearing her name. They sat waiting in the parking lot. The weather was terrible, and Johnny Gattuso was late.

Around half past, Gattuso finally rolled up in an orange Chevy Camaro, a beater. He was alone. Eto got out of the car and ushered him into the vestibule of Mary Lou's. Gattuso said he couldn't get in touch with his backer – it was a long story.

Well, the guy from La Grange was ready to sign for the place, Eto told him, so Gattuso should write down the guy's phone number and call him as soon as he'd had a chance to talk to his backer. Gattuso took out a pen and opened his wallet for a scrap of paper, revealing a Cook County sheriff's badge tucked inside.

Oh, don't worry about that, said Gattuso. He wasn't a cop. Well, he was a sheriff's deputy, technically, but it was as a part-time employee, a process server who'd supposedly deliver warrants a few days a month. This kind of thing had long been done for connected guys. Besides, it wasn't the worst idea, in their line of work, to have a badge.

Meanwhile, Mary Lou waited outside in the parking lot. She wasn't alone. Across the street, she noticed two men sitting in a brown car parked on Ogden, facing the club. They seemed to be in their 40s, each wearing some type of hat.

About 15 minutes later, she watched the man she'd later learn was Johnny Gattuso exit the club and drive off. The thing she'd remember, some weeks later, was that at just the same time, the two men in the brown car drove off, too.

Months later, as a *Chicago Tribune* story would report, the FBI figured out what happened: The Outfit had lured Eto to be shot in the vacant restaurant. But there had been an unexpected wrinkle: Mary Lou, playing chauffeur that morning, had likely spooked the hit men.

A leaky radiator had granted Ken Eto a stay on his death sentence. For a little while, at least.

IT WAS TWO DAYS BEFORE CHRISTMAS 1950. PRISONER No. 8092 had been in the Idaho State Penitentiary since October, when he'd been sentenced to 14 years. Along with two coconspirators, Ken Eto had used a variation on the classic “pigeon drop” scam to swindle a local out of $5,000. He persuaded the mark to front some money for a shipment of jewels he had coming in, in return for a bigger payout later. In reality, of course, there were no jewels.

Now, after interviewing the convict, an institutional parole officer at the prison submitted his admission summary. There was much to like about his subject. Eto, 31, was “of high normal intelligence,” with an IQ of 109, and “very friendly, outgoing … at turns frank and revealing and at other times somewhat evasive and noncommittal.”

Since his release from Minidoka (according to one story Steve Eto heard, his father got out “by saying he was Chinese”), Ken Eto had spent most of his 20s traveling across the country solo, just as he had along the West Coast earlier. But this time, instead of supporting himself as a migrant laborer, he had worked as a dealer, cardsharp, and pool shark. For two years, he dealt cards off and on at a club in Denver, building his own bankroll on the side. He’d spent so much time gambling across the High Plains states that he earned the nickname Joe Montana.

Eto moved back to Idaho in 1949. By his own admission, he’d developed a “greed for easy money” as a grifter, and soon he was fleeing the state for Chicago. It was there that he married his first wife, Teresa, one of the city’s many Polish Americans, and became a father. Teresa would give birth to five of Eto’s six children.

It was also in Chicago, on Valentine’s Day 1950, that Ken Eto was arrested on the Idaho charges. In the nine months he spent locked up, he was a model inmate. He worked as a janitor in the prison hospital and became an avid student, taking courses in English, citizenship, restaurant management, and bookkeeping.

What had happened in Idaho wouldn’t happen again, Eto assured the parole officer. He’d learned his lesson. “Prognosis,” the officer concluded, “is considered favorable. Further delinquency involvement does not appear to be indicated.”

Eto returned to Chicago, where his wife would play a role in her new husband’s future career. Teresa Eto was a gambler herself and ran a card game that drew Outfit affiliates. “She’s the one who introduced him to people that were connected in organized crime,” says Steve Eto, who would come to know her as Aunt Terry.

Years later, an informant would furnish an additional insight into Ken Eto’s underworld education: Delinquent on a juice loan he’d taken from an Outfit loan shark, the young gambler had been beaten by mob enforcers. But Eto, according to an FBI report, “displayed such stoicism that he impressed the hoodlums and was eventually employed by them.”

THE LAST TIME ELAINE SMITH SAW KEN ETO BEFORE HE was shot in the head was at the Chicago FBI office on September 16, 1980 – a few months after the Holiday Inn bust. After taking his fingerprints, obtaining a mug shot, and administering a handwriting test to see if his penmanship matched that on the bolita slips, Smith sat down with two coffees.

“You know, Mr. Eto, we would very much like you to cooperate with us. We need the help of people like you to defeat the Outfit,” Smith told him, as she recalled in the memoir she wrote years later.

What Eto did next surprised her: He took her hands in his. “I understand, Agent Smith, that you have a job to do, and trying to convince me to be a snitch is part of it. But that is not who I am.”

He continued: “I know I may go to prison for some time. But I could do that standing on my head.”

This was the first time the taciturn racketeer, old enough to be her father, had ever really spoken to her. Elaine Smith knew little of his past then – his childhood, Minidoka.

“I will never cooperate,” Eto added. He withdrew his hands from hers. “This is nothing to me.”

A **FEW DAYS AFTER KEN** Eto met Johnny Gattuso at the restaurant, Big Joe Arnold called again. Caesar DiVarco wanted to meet with him at his social club, Oldsters for Youngsters, at 11:30 a.m. the next day.

Eto arrived and greeted DiVarco and Arnold, along with a Greek bartender named Pete. Arnold had to run some errands, so he put his coat on and left.

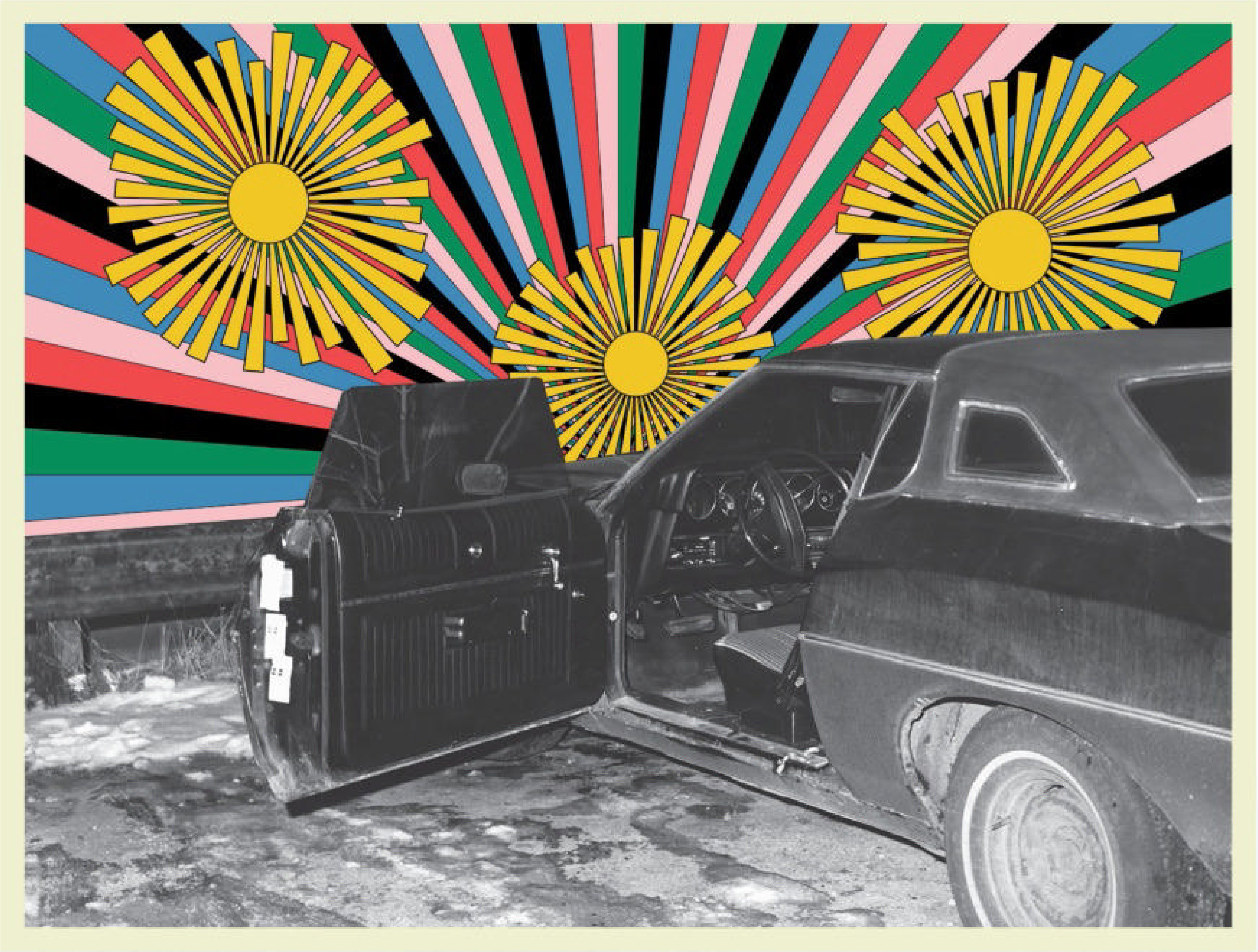
DiVarco sat down with Eto to talk about this lease. Eto explained that he had never heard back from Johnny Gattuso, so he’d made the deal with the La Grange guy.

Well, Caesar said, tonight Eto needed to meet Gattuso and Jay Campise at the American Legion. And then they’d all go have dinner with Vince Solano, the North Side skipper.

In the decades since he had first met Solano in the ’50s, in all the years he’d dutifully sent millions of dollars in gambling proceeds up the chain, Eto had never been invited to dinner with the boss.

Walking back to his car, now decorated with a parking ticket he’d never pay, Eto knew that after all this time, after all the work he’d done for them, the Outfit, his associates, the men he thought respected him, the men he’d enriched for years – they didn’t know him at all. He would never snitch.

They were going to kill him for nothing.



Eto's '76 Torino after the failed hit

PHOTOGRAPH: CHICAGO POLICE DEPARTMENT

> **WHEN THE FIRST SHOT HAD HIT THE BACK OF HIS HEAD, HE'D THOUGHT: I KNEW IT. SO THIS IS IT, JUST LIKE I'D FIGURED. BUT THEN, AS THE SECOND BULLET HIT, HE'D REALIZED: I AIN'T DYIN'.**

INSIDE THE TORINO, KEN ETO'S BODY was slumped across the front seat, blood still dripping out the six entrance and exit wounds. A few minutes had gone by. Eto opened his eyes and sat upright.

When the first shot had hit the back of his head, he'd thought: I knew it. So this is it, just like I'd figured. But then, as the second bullet hit, he'd realized: I ain't dyin'. By the third shot, he'd started shaking, falling to his side, convulsing, pantomiming his own death throes. He heard the sound of Campise's and Gattuso's footsteps growing fainter as the men ran from the car.

He'd been shot three times in the head and hadn't even lost consciousness. His blood had soaked his shirt, and pooled on the front seat, and dripped all the way down into his loafers. He was in a lot of pain, tremendous pain, and he couldn't hear too well, either – but he was alive.

Looking out the windows, Eto couldn't see anybody else around. He got the driver's side door open and lurched out. As he staggered across the icy parking lot, blood drops spattered from his head onto the asphalt. He slipped and fell to the ground, struggled to his feet again. That beater car Eto had seen when he drove into the lot was gone.

Eto stumbled back toward the street, blood trailing him in the snow. Reaching Grand Avenue, he saw the lights of a bar up ahead. That didn't seem like the best idea. He kept walking. An old-fashioned neon marquee sign on the façade of the Terminal Pharmacy was lit: "Free Delivery."

Eto walked in sometime after 8 p.m. Morris Robinson, the pharmacy's owner, was on duty. "I just asked him what was wrong," he would tell John Drummond the next day for a TV news report. "And he didn't say anything. I said, 'What happened to you?' He said he was shot. I said there weren't any doctors here. He asked me to call him an ambulance. I called him an ambulance."

The paramedics arrived minutes later. Along with a police cruiser.

In addition to the six holes in his head and a screaming headache, Eto had gained some other new problems in the past half hour – chief among them a healthy fear of the Chicago police. It was the first time he'd been afraid of the cops in years. But now the days of ingratiating himself with his old friend, Detective Fred Pascente, with dinner for him and his pals on the Organized Crime Task Force were over, just like that.

The corrupt Chicago police force wasn't going to protect him anymore, and he knew it. It might even try to finish the job of killing him. So as the paramedics tended to his wounds and loaded him into the ambulance, Eto, dazed though he was, insisted the younger of the two cops on the scene, a rookie, get in the back with him for the ride to the hospital.

ELAINE SMITH WAS OUT OF TOWN IN Colorado when the phone rang in her hotel room. It was Bill Brown, her supervisor at the FBI. Ken Eto had been shot. Not only that, he had survived and was asking for her.

Smith was astonished. Why would they shoot him? It made no sense. Facing a year or two at most on the gambling charges, Eto had remained stone silent in the face of all efforts by the FBI to turn him. She knew this personally.

Who might have been the triggerman? Brown asked.

Smith was gobsmacked. Obviously, this had come down from the bosses on the North Side – a hit like this would need to be sanctioned, possibly even by the upper echelons in the suburbs. After a few moments, Smith threw out a couple of names, including a veteran North Side soldier.

"Jasper Campise?"

BY 9 P.M., A PHALANX OF FEDERAL AND CITY AUTHORITIES had descended on Eto's hospital room, sealing him off in tight protective custody. It was unfamiliar terrain for all involved. In the history of Chicago crime, plenty of gangsters had been felled by a hail of bullets. But few had survived – certainly never a mob boss as prominent as Eto.

By 11:30, Eto had been stabilized. Trauma doctors at Northwest Community Hospital quickly concluded that not only had he suffered no brain damage, but none of the bullets had even cracked his skull. The .22 had always had a reputation for reliability with Outfit hit men, but here it had failed them. Perhaps the assailants had used old ammo or tampered with the gunpowder to reduce the noise.

Whatever happened, three point-blank shots to the head had miraculously left Eto with little more than superficial wounds, his braincase intact. He had a nasty concussion. But he was conscious and able to talk.

With Elaine Smith in Colorado, any initial breakthrough in getting information from him would have to be made by someone else. But Eto had enough of his wits about him to refuse to talk unless he could be assured it would not lead to charges against him. And he knew what talking meant: Not only would he be turning informant, but he would also be turning the page on his decades of syndicate service. Once he mentioned a single name, there would be no going back.

The FBI needed a federal prosecutor who could offer Eto immunity. So they called on assistant U.S. attorney Jeremy Margolis.

This happened to be the monthly Thursday night that Margolis's terrorism task force in Chicago got together for what they called "choir practice." Explains the prosecutor, a native Chicagoan who was 35 at the time: "From 7:30 until about 12:30, we would sing and dance and have a cocktail or two at the BeefSteak Inn on Sheridan Road and Morse Avenue." As he was leaving that night, his pager pinged. He was to call the FBI right away. After Margolis found a pay phone and dialed in, the bureau patched him through to the FBI's top man on the scene at the hospital, Ed Hegarty.

"Tokyo Joe has just been shot. Can you get down here immediately?"

Speeding in his U.S. Marshals Service squad car, Margolis made it in less than 12 minutes. He arrived to find Hegarty, Bill Brown, and, he recalls, "many, many, many other agents and Chicago police officers" in the hospital corridor.

The federal agents brought Margolis up to speed. Eto would likely ask for immunity. He would likely ask about the witness protection program. And he needed to be flipped – now.

Journalists were beginning to gather that there was something drawing the police to the hospital. Once word filtered back to the Outfit that Eto had survived, if it had not already, its first move would be to kill the hit men who'd messed up. "Once they got whacked," says Margolis, "you have no witnesses to identify Vince Solano, who was the boss that we all assumed was the guy who ordered the hit."

Alongside Hegarty, Brown, and Chicago police investigator Phil Cline (who would later become superintendent), Margolis entered the hospital room. Eto was sitting in bed, hooked up to an IV drip, his head now heavily bandaged. Blood shimmered through the gauze. Someone turned on a tape recorder. They began talking.

Eto knew that of the men around his hospital bed, only the young prosecutor had the power to immunize him. He requested that everyone leave the room except Margolis. They did. The tape recorder was turned off. It was just the two of them and the sounds of monitors beeping and whirring.

"I understand what you're thinking, and I understand the difficulty that you're facing," Margolis told Eto. "I know what face and respect means to you."

Eto was a man of his word. Margolis knew this. He also knew betrayal would not come easily to Eto, who had been told by his father that he was descended from samurai – warriors of virtue, chamberlains of the feudal lords, expected to fall on their swords rather than betray their masters. The federal prosecutor shared some ground with him on this: Like Mamoru Eto, Margolis's father was a swordsman, belted in aikido, karate, and kendo. Margolis told Eto of his own journey to become a seasoned judoka, of the Ginza festivals he'd attended at a local Buddhist temple, of the code of courage and loyalty to which Margolis knew Eto adhered: both the warrior's code of Bushido and the gangster's code of omertà.

> **"THERE IS NO MORE BOND," MARGOLIS TOLD ETO. "IT'S NOT YOU THAT'S BREAKING IT. THEY BROKE IT. THEY BROKE IT BY TRYING TO KILL YOU."**

A bandaged Eto is escorted out of Northwest Community Hospital after the attempt on his life.

Eto wasn't a sentimental man. Margolis saw him as a cold, calculating figure; his business required nothing less. But as Margolis became less of a stranger to Eto, the prosecutor sensed the walls between them beginning to fall.

Margolis leaned in. He began to make the bigger point: Eto was no longer obligated to the Outfit. "There is no more bond," he said. "It's not you that's breaking it. They broke it. They broke it by trying to kill you – because they didn't understand that you would've gone to your dying day without breathing a word about them. You know that, I know that. They didn't trust you." He paused, letting the words sink in.

"You know why?" Margolis continued. "Because you're Japanese."

With the concussed Eto having trouble hearing, Margolis leaned in closer. "They didn't trust you because *you're not like them,* and they tried to kill you because you're not like them. And it's not that you now owe them less. You now owe them nothing. The vow is gone. They tried to kill you unnecessarily, improperly, wrongfully."

The injured mobster eyed him warily. Margolis moved on to the cold truth of Eto's situation. "You and I both know that you have no choice. The issue isn't what must you do. The issue is how quickly you do it."

Margolis estimated they had somewhere under an hour left to find and arrest Eto's assailants before word leaked out that their target had survived. By not talking now to the feds, Eto wouldn't just be putting his life in further danger, Margolis reasoned with him; he'd be losing something precious: the chance for *revenge*. "You give us their names," vowed Margolis, "and we will go out and get them and then try to get Vince Solano for what he tried to do to you."

Eto thought about it. To run headlong in the opposite direction from the one his entire life had taken, with only a few minutes of consideration – this was the demand. Violence had always trailed Eto, had robbed him of his childhood, of his freedom. It had defined him. And then he had mastered it. He had found his place within it. He had become a man to be respected and feared. But now the violence that had ordered his life had turned against him again.

PHOTOGRAPH: BARRY JARVINEN/CHICAGO *SUN-TIMES*

Ken Eto looked at Jeremy Margolis.

“OK.”

Having gotten the answer he wanted, Margolis exited into the hall, where the assembled agents and cops burst into applause. They had overheard everything. Margolis hadn’t realized he’d been shouting at the deafened Eto. But they still had to make things official. So Margolis and the other high-ranking officials walked back into the room, a tape recorder now running.

Margolis put his badge and federal credentials into Eto’s hands, then clasped his own hands over Eto’s, which were smeared with the blood that had seeped through the bandages. Perhaps for the first time in his life, Ken Eto began thinking aloud for an audience.

“They took my freedom away,” he rasped. “I can’t walk the street. I have to fight them. They had their shot. They muffed it. I think I would be better off if they didn’t muff it. But as long as they muffed it, maybe I shall go this route.”

And with that, they then cemented the deal: immunity in exchange for cooperation.

ELAINE SMITH WAS WOKEN again by a second phone call. This time, it was from Bob Walsh, another supervisor at the FBI: Eto had flipped. He’d named the gunman: Johnny Gattuso. Jay Campise had been there, too, to set Eto up.

The Chicago police had arrested Gattuso at his home in Glenview before dawn, then Campise at his condominium in River Forest. When she was back from Colorado, Walsh continued, they would need her help to turn Eto into their star witness and bring the Outfit down.

Smith was breathless. Eto had been her case. She would be on the next plane, whatever it took. Walsh stopped her.

She should have her vacation, and get some rest and relaxation. When she got back, Eto would be all hers.

JAY CAMPISE AND JOHNNY GATTUSO HAD BEEN plunged into an inferno. The men who had conspired to murder Ken Eto had now traded positions with him. While Eto recuperated under tight federal protection, Campise and Gattuso were confined to the hell of the Metropolitan Correctional Center, the grim, wedge-shaped federal jail in the Loop.

Neither Campise nor Gattuso had so far talked to the FBI, but the authorities felt sure the Outfit would try to kill both regardless. The challenge facing Margolis and the other principals of Operation Sun-Up, the federal operation launched off Eto’s cooperation, was to keep them alive long enough to be persuaded to talk.

After the two made bail on state charges of attempted murder, Margolis, fearing their immediate elimination once out on the street, indicted Gattuso and Campise on federal charges of violating Eto’s civil rights. “I argued for very, very high bonds, arguing that they were huge flight risks,” recalls Margolis. “And the argument was, ‘They have no choice but to run.’ ” The gambit worked. With bail set at $1.8 million for Campise and $1.5 million for Gattuso, authorities figured neither would be leaving lockup anytime soon.

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Outfit boss Vince Solano

Margolis had to convince only one of them that their survival depended on talking. But turning them would not be easy. Jasper “Jay” Campise, 67, was an experienced Outfit soldier. A potbellied, toad-faced juice loan man rarely seen without a cigar hanging from his mouth, he had narrowly avoided a murder charge in 1966 and had little patience for federal prosecutors.

“Fuck off, kid,” Margolis recalls Campise barking as he came calling at the MCC.

Sitting across from the aging crook, Margolis realized that Campise truly believed his Outfit status would get him a pass for the Eto fiasco. Even in jail, he felt untouchable. “I told him, ‘You’re dead,’ ” says Margolis. “And I could tell in his face that he didn’t believe it.”

While the overweening Campise had been defiant, Margolis encountered an entirely different demeanor when confronting the man who’d actually shot Eto. Gattuso, petrified and exhausted, “looked defeated,” recalls Margolis.

John Gattuso, 47, was a mere mob associate – a hanger-on, relegated in the past to managing syndicate restaurants, strip clubs, gay bars, and bathhouses. Perhaps shooting Eto had been his opportunity to become a made man with the Outfit. The revelation that he’d become a sworn deputy while moonlighting as a mob hit man had caused significant embarrassment for the Cook County sheriff’s office. But that was nothing compared with the shame Gattuso had brought upon the underworld.

“His shoulders were slumped, his eyes were downcast,” recalls Margolis. “He just looked like a beaten, beaten, beaten pup.”

Aiding in Margolis’s efforts to turn him was a remarkable discovery: An attempted hit on Gattuso inside the

(Continued on page 104)

PHOTOGRAPH: FBI

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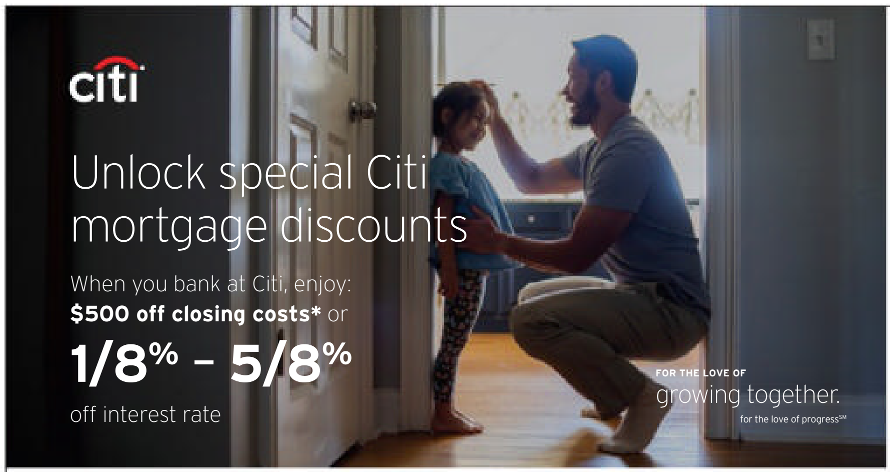

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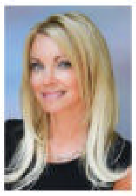

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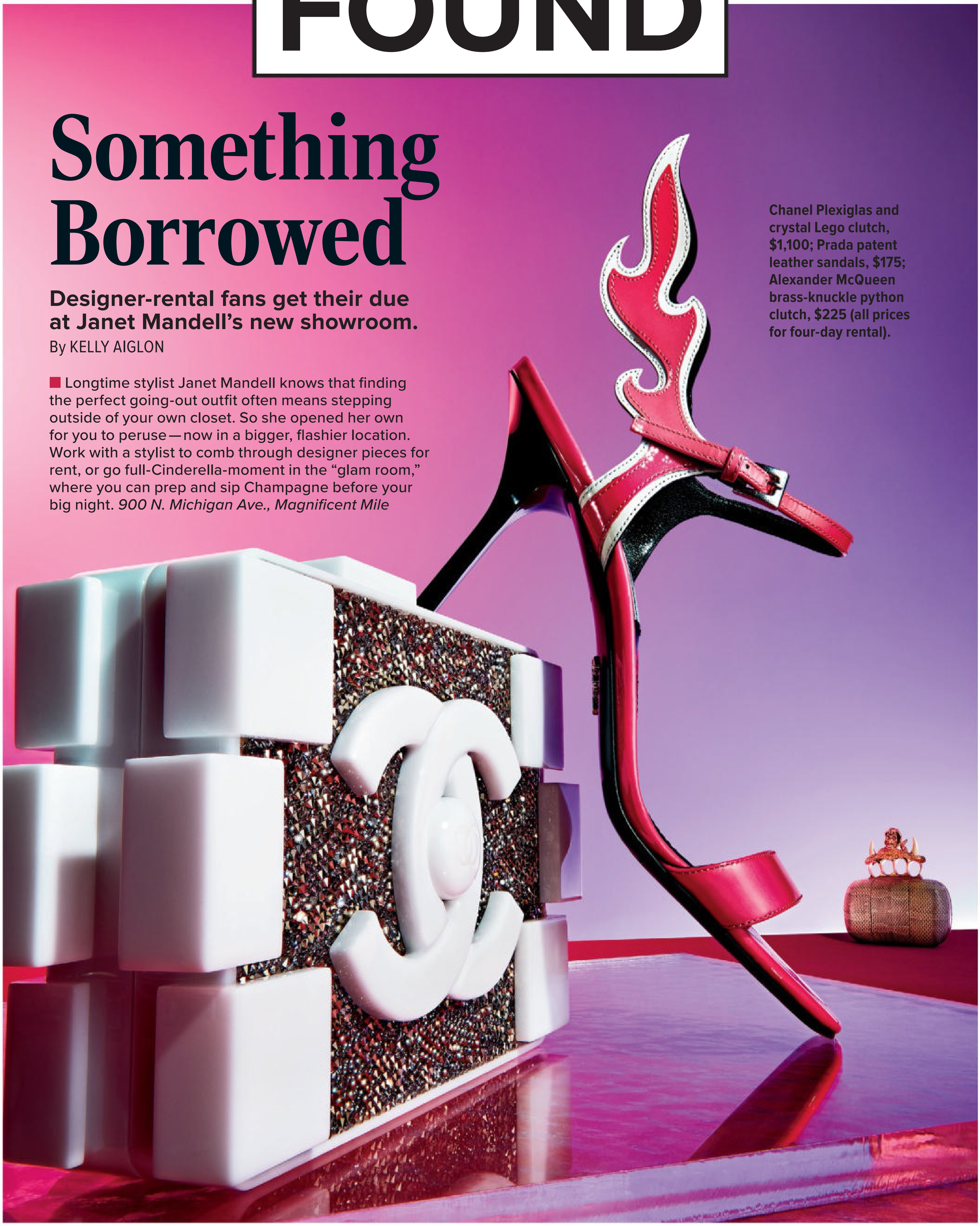
Something Borrowed

Designer-rental fans get their due at Janet Mandell's new showroom.

By KELLY AIGLON

■ Longtime stylist Janet Mandell knows that finding the perfect going-out outfit often means stepping outside of your own closet. So she opened her own for you to peruse—now in a bigger, flashier location. Work with a stylist to comb through designer pieces for rent, or go full-Cinderella-moment in the "glam room," where you can prep and sip Champagne before your big night. *900 N. Michigan Ave., Magnificent Mile*



Chanel Plexiglas and crystal Lego clutch, $1,100; Prada patent leather sandals, $175; Alexander McQueen brass-knuckle python clutch, $225 (all prices for four-day rental).

STYLING BY JESSICA MOAZAMI

Photograph by POWELL JORDANO

Bari Zaki Studio
Bari Zaki Studio
3858 North Lincoln Avenue
Chicago Illinois 60613
①

STORE SCANNER

Paper Crush

Wedding and graduation season is here. Forget the e-greetings and visit these timeless stationery spots, each with a unique niche. By WEB BEHRENS

Best for paper poets

BARI ZAKI STUDIO
3858 N. Lincoln Ave., North Center

Eye it This quaint shop mixes owner-artisan Bari Zaki's three loves: paper, stationery, and bookbinding. With inventory from Japan, Germany, and England, she aims "to sell things you can't get everywhere"—such as pencils she wraps in gorgeous Japanese mulberry paper.

Buy it Beautiful hand-stitched blank books **(1)** would make for an eye-popping wedding guest book ($125–$175). Or lure the college-bound kid to actually write home by gifting them a postcard set ($10–$15).

Best for pen lovers

ATLAS STATIONERS
227 W. Lake St., Loop

Eye it Want to dabble in calligraphy or brush lettering to up your invitation skills? This downtown destination, owned by the Schmidt family for four generations, welcomes you to test-run a variety of tools here—and is happy to offer some tricks of the trade.

Buy it Amid its aisles of ink and notebooks, Atlas also has a great range of fountain pens, including entry-level options like TWSBI's Eco ($33) and finer instruments such as Edison Pen Co.'s Beaumont (2) ($149).

Best for card gifters

STEEL PETAL PRESS
2321 N. Milwaukee Ave., Logan Square

Eye it Made onsite on vintage presses you can watch in action, Steel Petal cards aren't afraid to drop a celebratory f-bomb. With messages ranging from sweet and whimsical to snarky, the cards "say what people actually think," owner-designer Shayna Norwood says with a chuckle.

Buy it Congratulate recent scholars with Graduation Fortune cards **(3)** ($6; any six Steel Petal cards for $24), featuring pullout affirmations: "You are one smart cookie."

Graduation
You are one smart cookie
PULL
Fortune
③

THE ENDORSEMENT

Your Next Shopping Destination: Crown Point, Indiana

I've always been willing to travel for retail therapy, and I knew I'd found a new fix when I stumbled upon the Instagram feed of **Blue Pear Mercantile**: a satisfying scroll of botanical posters, French soaps, handmade jewelry, geodes, and feathers of all varieties. GPS indicated that its location on the historic square of northwest Indiana's Crown Point (106 W. Clark St.) was less than an hour from Chicago. Sold.

When I moseyed in (and "mosey" aptly describes my slow saunter when entering a shopping wonderland), owner Robert Radzinski was testing perfumes. We got to chatting, and he enthusiastically told me about the elaborate Marie Antoinette–themed window display he was planning for the holidays. I made a mental note: Step it up, Macy's.

After leaving with four air plants and some artisan-designed playing cards, I realized Crown Point had more to offer. **Antique Vault & Records** (14 Courthouse Sq.) is a dungeon-like space where a Hanson poster was just the invitation I needed to browse. Across the street, **Blue Ribbon Vintage** (111 W. Joliet St.) promised a maze of disco shirts, melamine kitchenware, and the occasional cowbell.

I was charmed. And when the **Hunt & Gather Market** hits the Lake County Fairgrounds here May 12–13 to amass the wares of local makers, I will most definitely be back.
–KELLY AIGLON

PHOTOGRAPHY: (STORE AND NOTEBOOK) BARI ZAKI STUDIO; (PEN) ATLAS STATIONARY; (CARD) STEEL PETAL PRESS; (VASE) BLUE PEAR MERCANTILE

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THE GOODS

Patio Perfect

Outdoor entertaining makes a stylish return.

By JESSICA MOAZAMI

NICE SERVE
8 Oak Lane round resin tray, $46. *Neiman Marcus, 737 N. Michigan Ave., Magnificent Mile*

MEAL APPEAL
French Bull dinner plates, $42 for a set of four. *Art Effect, 934 W. Armitage Ave., Lincoln Park*

MOOD LIGHTING
Brigton handwoven rattan lanterns, available in three sizes, $50–$129. *Crate & Barrel, 850 W. North Ave., Lincoln Park*

STATEMENT SEAT
Mermelada Estudio powder-coated iron Raine outdoor lounge chair with Sunbrella bouclé cushions, $1,599. *CB2, 800 W. North Ave., Lincoln Park*

BOTTLE SERVICE
Thom Fougere natural oak bar cart with removable top serving tray, $599. *EQ3, 1520 N. Halsted St., Lincoln Park*

GRAPHIC NAPKINS
Baggu organic cotton reusable napkins in Sunshine Fruit, $28 for a set of three. *Humboldt House, 1045 N. California Ave., Humboldt Park*

PHOTOS: NEIMAN MARCUS (TRAY); FRENCH BULL (DINNER PLATES); CRATE & BARREL (LANTERNS); EQ3 (BAR CART); HUMBOLDT HOUSE (CLOTH SET); CB2 (CHAIR)

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For more information and to purchase tickets, visit www.apollochorus.org or text APOLLO to 90206

This program is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency.

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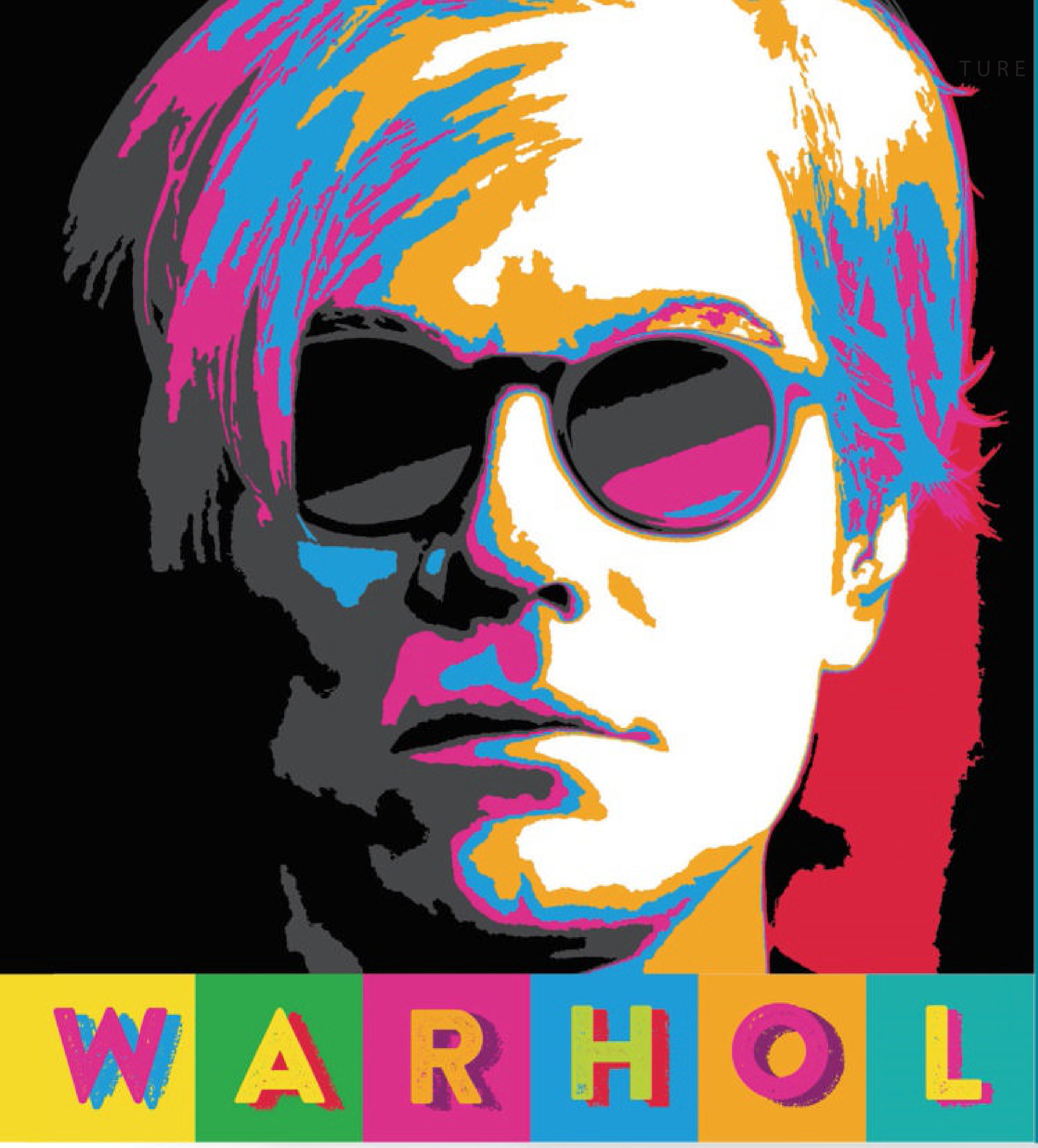

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Evanston Beaches

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CHICAGO'S NORTH SHORE
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Evanston Plein Air Festival

July 9–16. Plein air painting is the art of leaving the studio behind and painting in the great outdoors. Plein Air painters will descend on Evanston and compete in a juried invitational. Visitors are welcome to watch the artists as they work and vote for and purchase their favorites. ***evanstonpleinairfest.org***

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Photo Credit: Ethan Glading

Northbrook Grand Prix

The Intelligentsia Cup is an exciting criterium race series that takes place annually in Chicagoland, and the North Shore can be part of the excitement when the racers come to Downtown Northbrook. The race covers 10 cities over 10 days and is the largest road racing series in America. ***intelligentsiacup.com/northbrook***

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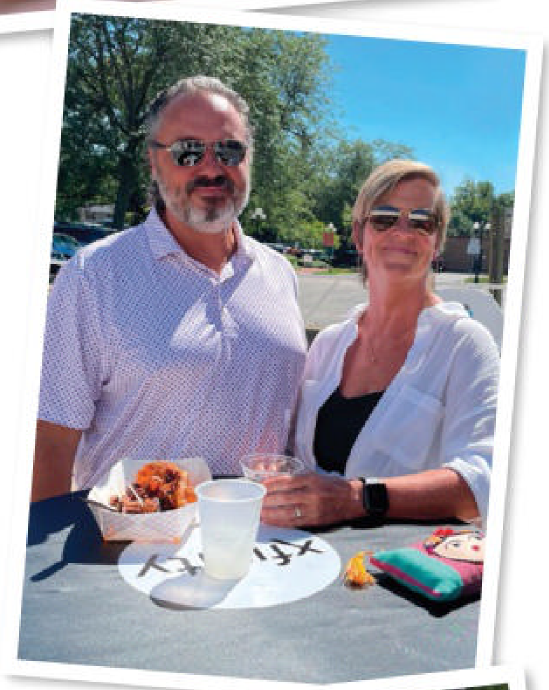

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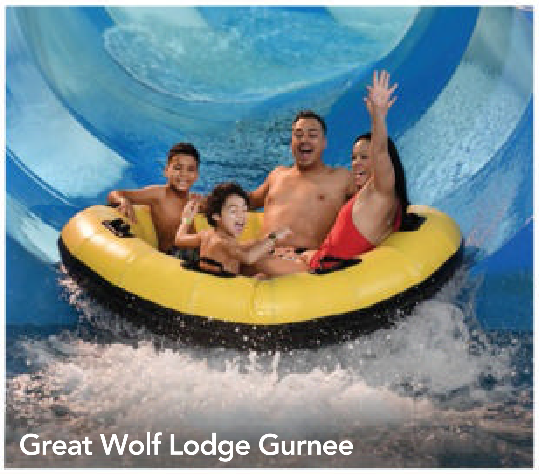
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Alsop pairs her artistry with major orchestras worldwide, including the ORF Vienna Radio Symphony as chief conductor, the São Paulo Symphony as conductor of honor, and the Baltimore Symphony as music director laureate. She is also a frequent guest of the London and New York Philharmonics and the Cleveland, Philadelphia, Leipzig Gewandhaus, Budapest Festival, La Scala, and Royal Concertgebouw Orchestras. Alsop makes Chicago her North American nexus as chief conductor of the Ravinia Festival, where she conducts the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and curates Breaking Barriers, a festival that spotlights and celebrates women in classical music, particularly in areas where they are heavily underrepresented, such as conducting and composing.

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Erin Clifford, JD, MA, is deeply passionate about helping professionals establish and maintain healthy, happy, and harmonious lifestyles. Her holistic approach to wellness consulting and coaching produces real and lasting results. While Erin has trained with some of the world's leading experts in nutrition, exercise, and healthy lifestyle management, corporate clients are particularly drawn to her wellness work because her training is coupled with expertise in education, business, law, and mental health. As a partner at Clifford Law Offices, she personally understands the stressors that accompany a high-demanding job and brings this sensitivity and awareness to her programs.

"Working professionals need wellness solutions that work with their go-go-go lives," she says. "I'm a busy working professional too. I get it. When I partner with corporations and firms, I begin by surveying staff to customize the curriculum to empower employees with realistic sustainable education and tools. Wellness works when it's catered to what people want, need and can be successfully put into action to bring more positivity and productivity to their lives."

Born and raised in Chicago, Erin began her career teaching for Chicago Public Schools, holds a juris doctor from DePaul College of Law, is certified as a holistic wellness coach through the Institute of Integrative Nutrition, and holds a master's degree in mental health counseling from Northwestern University.

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Carrie McCormick, a leader in the Chicago real estate market, has more than 20 years of real estate sales expertise along with an unsurpassed reputation for quality and results-oriented service and support. Carrie has personally sold one billion dollars in real estate and constantly stays on top of sophisticated technology, which has made her a forerunner in the marketing and selling of real estate. She has it down to a science. Her talents and on-target recommendations are always based on facts, reliable market analysis, and her vast knowledge of real estate and the market. Patient yet persistent, she is also highly detail oriented and a very determined negotiator.

McCormick is available to clients 24/7. "I communicate often and educate them on the market," she says. "My clients and I are a team. It is important that we work together to create a successful outcome." Selling real estate is about knowing what you are selling and articulating what the value is. Year after year, that focus has led to her placement in the top 1 percent for the Chicago Association of Realtors. She has also earned the association's Gold and Platinum awards and been named a Top Social Media Contributor. Last year, she started a podcast to share tips and market information with her colleagues and clients. "My job is to provide a perfect real estate experience for my clients. I have built a support system that does just that."

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CHICAGO
MAGAZINE

BARREL NIGHT

A CELEBRATION OF WHISKEY & FINE SPIRITS

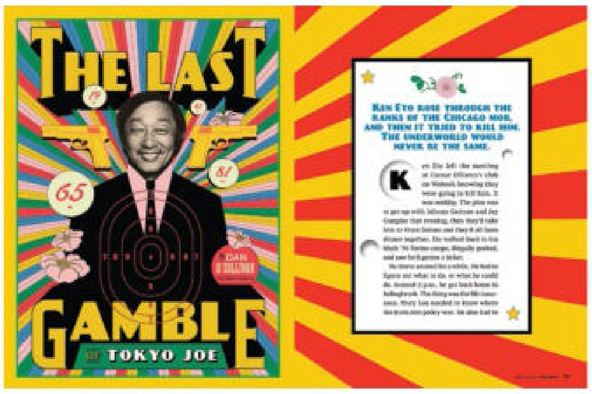
On March 15, *Chicago* magazine hosted 250 spirits enthusiasts at Wildman BT for a sampling of a wide array of barrel-aged whiskies and fine spirits. Attendees had the opportunity to meet master distillers and spirit ambassadors from more than 20 local and national distilleries, including Crown Royal, George Dickel, Heaven's Door, Four Roses, Castle & Key, St. George Spirits, Coppercraft, Moors Beer, Don Julio, and more. In between tastings, patrons snacked on micro cheese boards provided by Emmi Roth and bites by Coffey Girls' Coffee Cakes, Lou Malnati's, Robey Cafe, and Ahsyanna Catering. Guests all participated in the Drawing Booth, MK Event Photo, and American Bocce.

1
ST. GEORGE SPIRITS

2
CASTLE & KEY
DISTILLERY
RESTORATION

3
HEAVEN'S DOOR

1 **St. George Spirits pouring a cocktail** **2** **Castle & Key's tasting station** **3** **Heaven's Door tasting station** **4** **Moors Beer tasting station** **5** **Don Julio served its newly released Rosado tequila.** **6** **Delicious bites provided by Ashyanna Catering** **7** **Emmi Roth's cheese station** **8** **Guests enjoying a helium sugar balloon by MK Event Photo**



THE LAST GAMBLE OF TOKYO JOE

KEN ETO ROSE THROUGH THE RANKS OF THE CHICAGO MOB, AND THEN IT TRIED TO KILL HIM. THE UNDERWORLD WOULD NEVER BE THE SAME.

The Last Gamble

(Continued from page 83)

MCC had been unearthed. A weapon had even been found: a shiv fashioned from the metal sheathing of an air conditioner, Margolis recalls.

The prosecutor returned to the interrogation room and showed Gattuso the savage-looking jailhouse knife. Margolis was blunt: If Gattuso didn't cooperate, the mob would get to him eventually.

Margolis felt he had made his case as best he could. But while Ken Eto had been calculating even in his hospital bed, weighing his odds of survival, Gattuso seemed to lack such analytical instinct. "He just didn't have the courage to fix it," says Margolis. "He just didn't have the courage to turn his back on the people that he lived with for decades, that way of life."

It was all Gattuso had ever known. And it would be what he would return to – for better or worse – following another surprise development: Campise and Gattuso were being released on bond. "Organized crime affiliates were raising money and posting some houses, relatives' houses and the like, to help satisfy the bond," explains Margolis.

It was what the Outfit wanted. Gattuso was a free man again, a walking target. Out on the street, he visited an associate on the North Side. Chuck Renslow, a famed photographer and pioneer of gay Chicago nightlife, had long operated a series of leather bars in Caesar DiVarco's territory, kicking up the requisite tax to Gattuso, his main Outfit contact. But during this visit, as Renslow would later recall to a biographer, it was clear that "something was wrong."

Gattuso explained to Renslow that he had been tasked with killing Tokyo Joe, the gambling boss, and had mucked it up. Sitting across from his unlikely confessor, an exhausted Gattuso told the founder of the International Mr. Leather competition where he thought it was all heading.

As Renslow recalled: "He said, 'I won't be around too long.' "

NOW BACK IN CHICAGO, ELAINE SMITH was getting up to speed on Operation Sun-Up. Eto's account of the weeks that preceded the shooting presented tantalizing indications that Big Joe Arnold and Caesar DiVarco had been intimately involved in setting him up. The parking ticket had even provided a bit of corroborating evidence, confirming Eto had been near DiVarco's club the day he'd ordered him to dinner with Vince Solano.

Whether or not Gattuso or Campise talked, Smith and her fellow agents hoped more physical evidence could do some talking for them. Eto's Torino had been sitting in a police garage since the shooting but had not yet been examined for forensic evidence. That was where Smith would start. Just what evidence might be gleaned, however, was unclear. Eto had said both Campise and Gattuso had worn gloves; fingerprint analysis would be fruitless. No shell casings had been found in the car, indicating a revolver had been used, but no such weapon had been recovered, making ballistics evidence a likely dead end. A search for clothing fibers probably would be futile since Gattuso and Campise had no doubt discarded the suits and winter jackets they wore that night.

That left one other type of trace evidence. Campise had sat in the front passenger seat; Gattuso, in the rear, on the driver's side. Loose hairs, if recovered from the headrests and cushions, could be compared against samples plucked from Campise and Gattuso when they were in FBI custody.

While FBI technicians tore apart the Torino in a federal lot, painstakingly indexing and wrapping every part of the interior for analysis at FBI headquarters, Elaine Smith turned to what was still her greatest piece of evidence: Ken Eto himself. Eto was recovering comfortably within the secure confines of Naval Station Great Lakes, about 20 miles north of Chicago. He had an entire medical ward to himself, surrounded by 20 vacant beds and a sweeping view of Lake Michigan.

Steve Eto, accompanied by FBI agents, was flown in to visit his father at his bedside. Ken Eto reassured his son, by then a young man living in Minnesota, that he was recovering well – and would be taking his revenge against the people who'd done this to him. "Well, you're gonna hear a lot of things, that I turned rat," Ken told him. "I gave them their chance. So now it's my turn."

Round-the-clock FBI protection within a U.S. Navy installation ensured that even the most nefarious Outfit hit men would be unable to get to Eto. It also gave the feds a safe haven to begin quizzing the mob figure on more than three decades of underworld history – the potential germ of many more investigations to come.

While Smith was on vacation in Colorado, two other agents had taken the lead on debriefing Eto. But as the one who had first busted him, and the one he had asked for from his hospital bed, Smith had a unique relationship with the bureau's newest cooperator. And this time, she'd be speaking to him as an ally.

Smith would describe this first exchange in her memoir. She approached Eto, who was reading a newspaper in bed.

"So you remember me, Mr. Eto?" she asked.

Eto removed his reading glasses. It was his first time seeing her since that day in the Chicago FBI office. "How could I forget?" he said. "You run the show!"

Sitting down at his bedside, Smith found Eto in good spirits. "I guess you got what you wanted, huh?" he said.

Hardly, Smith adamantly assured him. She'd never wanted it to happen this way, for him to come so close to death. How had that happened, anyway?

The two made their way down the hall, where they settled into chairs to discuss it all: the fuss over the lease, that uncomfortable walk he'd taken with Vince Solano, the first gunshot. Talking that afternoon, Smith also received a crash course in just how massive, sleek, and powerful the Outfit was – and how thoroughly it had corroded public institutions in Chicago. Eto was insistent: No less an official than William Hanhardt, the chief of detectives for the Chicago Police Department, had been Outfit property for decades.

And the Outfit's influence extended far beyond Chicago. A machinery of payoffs had ensnared police officials, judges, and a multitude of political operatives at the local, state, and national levels, Eto explained. The Outfit's downtown "Connection Guys," as they were known, had enabled mass exploitation to make a few men rich, allowing monstrous acts of violence to go unpunished.

As they shared a pot of terrible coffee, Smith eyed the mob boss sitting across from her in slippers, a bathrobe, and a halo of gauze. She asked why Eto had gone to the dinner appointment, knowing it was likely a setup.

"I thought maybe there was a small percentage of an edge, but very small, and I had to take it," he answered. "For me, I had no other choice, but once Jasper directed me to the alley, I knew it was all over."

Now, perhaps, the Outfit would be taken for a one-way ride, too.

ON JULY 14, 1983, A resident of the Pebblewood Condominiums complex in Naperville noticed a blue-silver 1981 Volvo parked in the space next to his own. He was sure it had not been there the day before. Normally, he would have ignored it, but something smelled awful – and it was coming from the car.

Two days earlier, sometime around 9 a.m. on Tuesday, July 12, Jay Campise left his wife, Josephine, at home in River Forest to make arrangements for a wake. He'd planned to meet his brother at the chapel where they'd be laying out a family friend, and then he might head to the antiques store he'd kept as a front for years. Around the same time, about 11 miles east, Johnny Gattuso left his wife, Carmella, in Little Italy to pick up some materials for the drywalling he was doing in their apartment.

In the five months that they had been free on bond, Ken Eto's assailants had avoided each other, working on the assumption that it would be their best insurance policy: Should one go missing, they figured, at least the other would have a sporting chance of making it to the police. But then, the previous Thursday, prosecutors had disclosed to Campise's and Gattuso's attorneys, both longtime Outfit lawyers, a huge piece of pretrial discovery evidence. Hairs recovered from the front passenger and rear driver's side seats of Eto's Torino had been matched to their clients. It would not just be Eto's word against theirs; the feds now had corroborating physical evidence.

The Outfit was sending a message, leaving the corpses somewhere so public. They had wanted the car to be found.

Ultimately, it wouldn't matter. Even before the cops got to the Volvo, they knew what they were going to find. Elaine Smith raced to the western suburb on her rare night off. When the police popped the trunk of Campise's car, their suspicions were confirmed.

Jay Campise's blue dress slacks were pulled down around his ankles. His blue jacket was hiked up to his armpits, revealing numerous stab wounds to his distended abdomen. His head looked like a gray basketball, with rivulets of blood dried across his face. He was missing his shoes. Johnny Gattuso was lying along the opposite end, his head at Campise's feet. His white undershirt, stained brown with blood, had been forced up his torso as his stomach swelled from decomposition, revealing similar stab wounds. Gattuso's face had turned black. A garrote was still wrenched around his neck.

Since Tuesday evening, when Gattuso and Campise had failed to return home, the Chicago area had been broiling in temperatures in the low 90s. With the victims swollen to a disgusting size by the heat, the responding investigators would have to wait to tow the car back to a police garage before attempting to scrape the dead mobsters out of the trunk.

The Outfit was sending a message, leaving the corpses somewhere so public. They had wanted the car to be found. Their choice not to use a firearm was a message, too; the deaths of Jay Campise and Johnny Gattuso had not been quick. The body of Gattuso, in particular, bore signs of torture.

His car would be found days later, parked near an Outfit-controlled adult bookstore – a racket associated with the North Side crew – providing the first fresh clue in the new murder investigation. But barring a break in the case, it was all speculation who'd done it. In Eto's opinion, Vince Solano had not just ordered this double murder – he had almost certainly participated himself, perhaps killing the pair in his own home.

Smith wasn't convinced Solano would be that reckless. But killing Campise and Gattuso so savagely sure felt like an attempt to save face. Prosecutor Jeremy Margolis, meanwhile, believed it likely that Gattuso had been lured to a meeting by Campise. FBI reports sent to Rome in the months before the pair's deaths repeated concerns that at least one of the hit men might attempt to flee the country for Italy. Could a promise of safe passage have been a plausible enough ruse to draw Gattuso out into the open?

As for Campise, in all his arrogance, he very well may have participated in the attack, assured that killing Gattuso would be sufficient penance – right up until the knife was turned on him.

Upon hearing about it, even Eto had been surprised by Campise's murder. He'd figured Gattuso was a goner but that Campise would likely get the pass from the Outfit that he had been so confident of receiving.

Darkly chuckling, he concluded that Vince Solano must have been really angry.

ON APRIL 22, 1985, A BOOGEYMAN appeared on the 25th floor of the Dirksen Building downtown. Wearing a pointed black hood, with holes cut out for two eyes and a mouth, and a flowing black robe, this strange and ghostly apparition was escorted to his seat before the President's Commission on Organized Crime. Convened under extra-tight security for three days of hearings, the commission was eager to hear from Ken Eto, now a participant in the federal witness protection program, about his experiences with Laborers' Union Local 1 official Vincent Solano.

> **THE CHICAGO OUTFIT, INSOFAR AS IT STILL EXISTS, IS A GHOSTLY PRESENCE, REDUCED TO A SMALL-TIME EXISTENCE ON THE MARGINS OF THE CITY.**

Eto explained that Vince Solano tried to have him killed. The last time they had spoken, he said, "I just felt there was something wrong. He no longer trusted me." The result of this distrust: "Bang! I got shot in the head."

Solano, the most reticent of area crew chiefs in the Outfit, had been dragged into the sunlight. Brought before the commission after Eto's testimony, he looked a bit like a disgraced bank examiner, slightly clammy in his conservative suit. While Eto had been so forthcoming on the stand, appearing to enjoy himself – drawing laughter and amazement in the room as he mimed playing dead in his Torino, wriggling his hands above his hooded head as he slumped over – Solano mostly stayed mum, pleading the Fifth multiple times, always in the same flat tone.

Solano would survive the public appearance relatively unscathed. The slayings of Gattuso and Campise had served their purpose, effectively insulating him from the Eto murder attempt. He was among the few Outfit honchos to escape the raft of prison terms seemingly ushered in by Eto's cooperation with the feds.

Others weren't so lucky. In Kansas City, Eto made another cameo appearance, sans cloak and mask, at the massive trial that had resulted from Operation Strawman. That federal probe into Mafia control of Las Vegas casinos had snared not just the leadership of Kansas City's Civella family but four figures high up in the Outfit: Joey "the Clown" Lombardo, Angelo "the Hook" LaPietra, Jackie "the Lackey" Cerone, and, biggest of all, Joey Aiuppa, street boss of the Outfit, the man who'd likely given the final OK to kill Ken Eto. All were convicted and sent to federal prison.

Eto would help close more cases, too, including a homicide Elaine Smith had linked to the Outfit's takeover of bolita in the 1950s and '60s. Chavo Gonzalez had been abducted and murdered, his intestines hanging out of his belly, for throwing a pipe at LaPietra, then guarding one of Eto's card games. Eto identified the four assailants.

The cocaine empire of a syndicate figure named Sam Sarcinelli became an even longer thread to pull; Eto's description of how Sarcinelli invested the proceeds of his drug trafficking in Eto's bolita racket was just the start. For years after Eto's defection, Smith would pursue Sarcinelli's finances, from Colombia to California and all the way to Manhattan. Taking part in a penny stock scheme Eto was familiar with, Sarcinelli had colluded with the Genovese family to launder drug money on the financial exchanges. The case eventually snared a slew of white-collar crooks, as well as Sarcinelli himself.

Besides Campise and Gattuso, however, no one would pay harder for the Eto bungling than Caesar DiVarco, once the gangster-turned-informant's direct superior. It would be a slow fall for Little Caesar. Sparing his life, the bosses were satisfied merely to strip the 72-year-old DiVarco of his status as a North Side boss. DiVarco's old flunky, Big Joe Arnold, was elevated only briefly before he was imprisoned on charges of obstruction of justice – in a trial featuring the testimony of Ken Eto.

DiVarco's excommunication was, in some ways, worse than death; he lost the only identity he had ever had, built over decades of skulduggery and sleaze. Deprived of power, DiVarco became a sick, lagging member of the pack.

In 1984, DiVarco was given the dubious honor of becoming a test case for the use of RICO statutes in Chicago. Consigned to federal prison, DiVarco died in the process of being transferred to testify before a probe in Washington D.C., an old man abandoned by the syndicate to which he'd given his life.

Which left Ken Eto the last man standing, somewhere in the witness protection program.

TODAY, AT ANY TIME OF NIGHT, ON ANY day of the week, you can take a northwest-bound Blue Line train from the heart of the Loop to the Rosemont stop and there find a free shuttle bus to Rivers Casino in Des Plaines. Owned by the gaming conglomerate Churchill Downs Inc., the 44,000 square feet of table games and slot machines are operated by Rush Street Gaming, the firm of the billionaire real estate developer and major political fundraiser Neil Bluhm.

The downtown corridor of clip joints, gay bars, and somewhat sordid nightspots that gave Bluhm's company its name has now virtually disappeared. As with the area's porno theaters and adult bookstores, the out-call prostitution services professionalized in the postwar era by Tony Accardo have etherized over the internet, the madames of previous generations long gone. On the strip where Ken Eto operated, the old buildings are long demolished, replaced with the likes of the massive Waldorf Astoria and the streetfront façade of fashion house Marc Jacobs. The numbers and bolita rackets so expertly administered by Eto's operation have faded, no match for the ubiquity of state lottery games.

With a large handle of around $20 billion wagered since the state expanded lawful gambling to sports betting in 2020, Illinois – and, more specifically, Chicago – is quickly becoming a hub for legal action. And nowhere will draw as much of it as Bally's planned casino in River West. Between a slick downtown casino and the infiltration of sportsbooks into sacred venues like Wrigley Field, all this will likely demolish whatever illicit action remains on the street. The Chicago Outfit, insofar as it still exists, is a ghostly presence, reduced to a small-time existence on the margins of the city. Where once the Outfit's tentacles stretched to Hollywood, today the largely geriatric mobsters struggle to hang on to crumbs.

ON JANUARY 28, 2004, AN OBITUARY appeared in the pages of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*:

> *Joe Tanaka, 84, of Norcross died Friday. The family will have a private service. Mr. Tanaka was a native of Livingston, Calif., and a restaurant owner.*

Survived by his six children, "Joe Tanaka," born as he was to the federal witness protection program, had died peacefully in an area hospice following a battle with cancer.

"He was more than just a mobster," says his son Steve Eto, himself a father now, nearing the age his dad was at the time of his shooting. Big Joe Arnold – Uncle Joe, as Steve had known him – had approached the son shortly after his father's disappearance into witness protection, offering $10,000 to betray his father's location. But Steve refused, and his dad managed to elude the mob.

Steve had felt the full dimensions of Ken Eto in the years since his father had been freed from the Outfit. After driving to Minnesota to deliver a car to Steve, Ken had gotten to meet his grandchildren.

His Justice Department severance pay, secured by Elaine Smith, had been enough to finance a comfortable retirement. When Smith and her husband visited Eto in Hawaii, as she would recall in her memoir, her underworld gem had spoken to her as never before.

"I will forever be grateful to you Elaine, for all you have done for me. For all these years, you have been my friend and one of the few people I ever trusted."

"My father thinks of you as a daughter," added Linda, Ken Eto's real daughter.

Eto had moved to Hawaii to live with Linda, and in beautiful Oahu in the mornings, he'd go fishing, as he always had, and drink his coffee with the other retirees at McDonald's.

Later, after putting down more permanent retirement stakes in the Atlanta suburbs, he befriended a Latino immigrant family. The last photo of him, the only one he'd allowed to be taken by them, was at their daughter's quinceañera. The smiling, grandfatherly man in the image – now over 80, sporting a dashing white mustache and twirling the birthday girl on a dance floor – still had Chicago mob bullet fragments under his scalp.

"He was my father, you know what I mean?" says Steve Eto, whose own son has a tattoo of the Chicago skyline emblazoned with two words: "Tokyo Joe." "And I do love him and I do respect him."

In his last years of life, if he drove past a river or lake, Ken Eto would park at the shoulder, pop the trunk, and haul his fishing gear to the water. There were no more bets that needed to be hedged in case a number hit. There was no more money to be made. There was just a bucolic river on a beautiful morning before the mosquitoes took full flight, a line to be dipped, and fish to be caught and thrown back.

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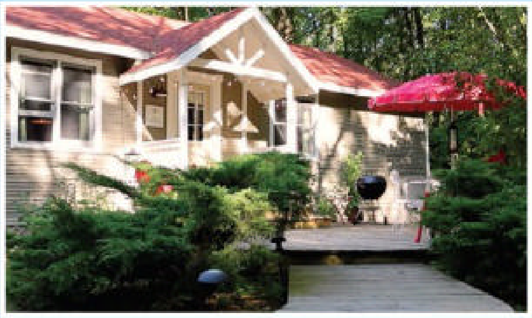

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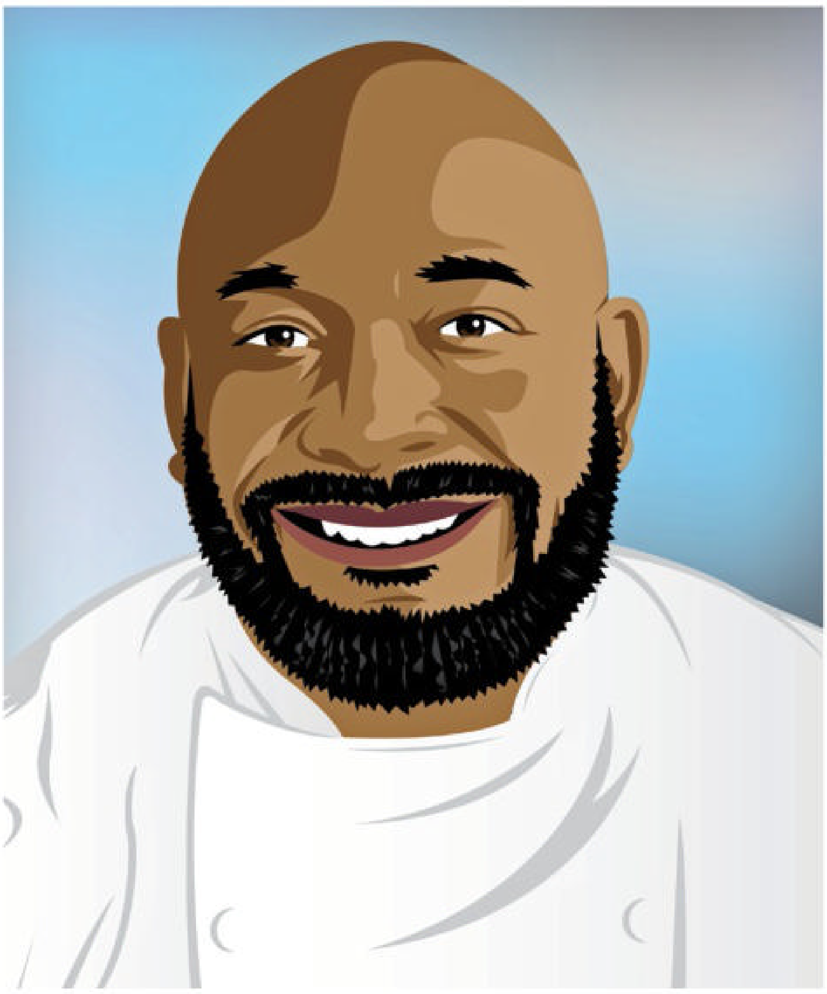

Erick Williams

The Virtue chef, 48, on the rule he lives by and why he refuses to be pigeonholed into soul food

Interview by MIKE THOMAS

■ **I can teach you how to cut lemons for the bar** or make purée for a dish. But the bigger question is, How can that translate to your everyday success? If I can teach you how to cut lemons uniformly as a garnish or for what we call speed lemons – ones you squeeze on food to give it a splash of acid – then I can start to create a process where your attention to detail becomes a little bit more acute.

■ **We wouldn't have tribal patterns from Africa** laced in our curtains if we didn't want to pay homage to a place that's informed our very existence in this country, alongside informing the food and the intentionality in the food that we cook.

■ **I understand why our culture fights hard** to have agency as it relates to soul food. However, *our* fight is a little broader. We fight hard to have agency over Southern food because it completes the puzzle. There were settlers from all around the world landing in the South, bringing their techniques and ingredients and spice mixes with them. And so for us, it's not enough to just talk about the food prepared with the scraps or parts not as sought after in the house. What happens to the chops, the loins, the hams, and everything else that wasn't readily available to Black people? Like most things, when you give them to someone else to prepare, they start to take on a new complexity. And I am most certain that happened as a result of Black people being the cooks in those kitchens.

■ **Southern food, like most food, changes** based on regionality. It's really intriguing to us how gumbo is thinner in New Orleans and, as it moves north, gets thicker.

■ **I believe in the concept of the golden rule:** Treat people the way you want to be treated. That's my North Star.

■ **The recipe for survival** is the same now as it was a hundred years ago: one day at a time. One day at a time doesn't remove or extinguish your ambitions, but it does give you an opportunity to be present in the moment. Slow it all down, stop trying to think about what you're going to do 12 months from now. That's a burden I don't want.

■ **When I'm cutting in the kitchen,** I have a practice where I eat the bad cuts. It's usually with vegetables. And I don't want to eat a ton of raw vegetables, so it subconsciously makes me focus a lot more. Call it a way of punishing myself. The goal is to have less and less scrap.

■ **I don't believe in bossing people.** I always want to be on the team. I always want to be in a position where I can learn and grow, and I don't need to be the guy who's above sweeping the floor.

■ **My life at work is my life across the board.** I don't form huge separations. I need my kitchen clean at home, I need my kitchen clean at work. Both give me great anxiety when they're in chaos.

■ **Until I exit, there isn't gonna be a day** when I can't find an opportunity to be involved in whatever community I'm a part of. You put me in a hole, man, I'm gonna figure out how to work with the worms. C

Illustration by QUICKHONEY

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